

# Summarised inspection findings

**Auchnagatt School**

Aberdeenshire Council

28 November 2023

## Key contextual information

Auchnagatt School is a small, rural school situated in the village of Auchnagatt, Ellon in Aberdeenshire. At the time of inspection, the school roll was 72 with children taught across three multi-stage classes. The headteacher is well established in the school and community. She has a 0.3 full-time equivalent teaching commitment. Across the school, a minority of children require additional support. Almost all children live in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation zones 6 to 8.

There have been changes to staffing over a number of years with the teaching team only recently becoming fully established. Last session, the school experienced disruptions and closures as a result of local weather. This year is the first session that the school has returned to full capacity after periods of lockdown.

### 1.3 Leadership of change

good

This indicator focuses on collaborative leadership at all levels to develop a shared vision for change and improvement which is meaningful and relevant to the context of the school within its community. Planning for continuous improvement should be evidence-based and linked to effective self-evaluation. Senior leaders should ensure the need for change is well understood and that the pace of change is appropriate to ensure the desired positive impact for learners. The themes are:

- developing a shared vision, values and aims relevant to the school and its community
- strategic planning for continuous improvement
- implementing improvement and change

- The headteacher provides effective leadership and has a clear vision for the school. Led ably by the headteacher, staff and children foster a positive and welcoming ethos at Auchnagatt School. Children, staff and parents have a high level of respect for the headteacher. Staff and parents are supportive of the headteacher and work collaboratively to improve the school well.
- The headteacher worked in partnership with the school community to create the school's vision, values and aims. The values of respect, confidence, friendly, welcoming, healthy and active are well-established. Staff have plans to review and refresh the school values to reflect the current context and work of the school. The headteacher is supporting the pupil council to consult their peers. They are preparing to gather the wider views of parents, partners and the local community to develop the new school vision and values.
- Children and staff work together annually to create class charters based on both the school values and articles from The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Staff and children use class charters well to agree expectations about behaviour and the contribution both adults and children will make to learning. For example, children agree to be respectful and helpful to others and adults commit to listening actively to children and providing support where needed. As a result, children feel secure and confident in the school environment. They engage well in their learning and are proud of their school.
- The headteacher has a well-established approach to quality assurance in the school. She regularly carries out lesson observations and leads focus groups with children to support the improvement of learning and teaching. The headteacher and teachers use both the design principles and How Good is Our School? 4<sup>th</sup> edition to evaluate their work. As a staff team, they agree the key focus of evaluation activities which are aligned appropriately to the school improvement plan. They use this information well to agree the strengths and areas for

development for the school. As a next step, the headteacher should support teachers to reflect on these areas regularly as part of the quality assurance process. This should inform the development of the learning and teaching policy to support all teachers to plan consistently high-quality experiences for children across the curriculum. The headteacher should involve all teachers in reviewing their approach to the teaching of writing. This should support a consistent approach for children regardless of stage.

- The school receives a small amount annually of Pupil Equity Funding (PEF). The headteacher and staff identify interventions to support children who are currently not on track with their learning. They purchase additional resources to enable children to practise and revise spelling and number concepts. In addition, the headteacher aligns funding to increase time for staff to support identified groups with a focus on wellbeing and nurture. This has had a very positive impact on ensuring children develop the skills to express themselves appropriately and manage different social situations that may arise. As a result, identified children make very good progress towards improvement in these key areas. The headteacher shares with the Parent Council how PEF will be spent to improve progress for literacy, numeracy and wellbeing. Moving forward, the headteacher should consult parents and children annually about how funding is used.
- All teachers work effectively together to lead aspects of school improvement including teaching approaches in literacy, numeracy, health and wellbeing and science. Overall, they are reflective practitioners and proactive in reviewing approaches to ensure that they meet the needs of children. For example, teachers have increased the discrete teaching of science to support children to identify more clearly the skills and knowledge they develop in this curriculum area. Teachers engage well with professional learning and share this across the staff team and with colleagues within the cluster. For example, teachers shared with colleagues their approach to supporting children to develop important skills in literacy such as fine motor control and rhyme and analogy. They work closely with partners, such as the educational psychologist and additional support for learning teacher, to review their practice. Currently there are a large number of areas teachers are developing across the school. The headteacher should now streamline the improvement plan to ensure it is manageable and achievable for all staff.
- All children participate in leadership groups such as the pupil council, Rights Respecting School and Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) committees and Gardening Club. These groups help children to contribute positively to the ethos and life of the school. For example, the DYW committee has organised and hosted successful careers fairs to increase children's knowledge of the wide range of occupations available to them. Children take on roles such as chairperson and talk positively about how these roles help them to develop skills in communication. Children enjoy the mixed stage committees and value the contributions of their peers. Younger children are supported well by their older buddies to contribute and take part positively in the leadership groups. As a result, most children feel confident and listened to and understand they play an important role in improving their school. As planned, teachers should support children to evaluate more effectively the impact of their work.
- The headteacher meets termly with staff to review children's progress in literacy and numeracy. They discuss the progress individual children make and the support required to stay on track with their learning. As a result, staff plan appropriate interventions to support children's progress in literacy, numeracy and wellbeing. Longer term, it is not always clear which interventions have the most impact on improving children's progress. The headteacher should now support teachers to review more regularly the progress children make. She should refine her tracking procedures to make this clear for staff. This should help teachers make sound decisions about their practice based on relevant evidence and data.

## 2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

good

This indicator focuses on ensuring high-quality learning experiences for all children and young people. It highlights the importance of highly-skilled staff who work with children, young people and others to ensure learning is motivating and meaningful. Effective use of assessment by staff and learners ensures children and young people maximise their successes and achievements. The themes are:

- learning and engagement
- quality of teaching
- effective use of assessment
- planning, tracking and monitoring

- Staff at Auchnagatt School place positive relationships at the heart of everything they do. They know children and their families very well and work together effectively to provide well-considered support. As a result, all children benefit from the nurturing and supportive learning environment. Children who face challenges and barriers to learning are well supported through the strong relationships with staff. The school's ethos is underpinned by their vision and values which are reflected in the children, who are welcoming, polite and well-mannered. Children are very proud of their school.
- Staff use the school house system well to allow children regular opportunities to develop their collaborative working skills. Children come together in their houses to work on themed collaborative weeks, transition events, learning across different curriculum areas, committees and assemblies. These opportunities for working across stages enable children to demonstrate teamwork, leadership and presenting skills. Their talk and number partners for literacy and numeracy also enhance children's abilities to work collaboratively. Older children show kindness and empathy towards younger children by supporting them in their play and learning. Teachers plan the collaborative weeks well to allow children to focus on key areas of the curriculum as they work with children across all stages.
- Most children engage well with their learning and are eager to be involved in lessons. They are keen to share their ideas and opinions within class, group and paired settings. Across most lessons, tasks match the needs and abilities of most children and provide the correct level of challenge. In a minority of lessons, the purpose of learning is not always clear. There is a need to ensure that older children are consistently provided with high-quality, differentiated activities matched to their levels of ability.
- In most lessons, teachers use questioning effectively to engage children and extend their learning. In the majority of lessons, they provide children with opportunities for personalisation and choice to encourage children to apply learned skills to different contexts. In strong examples, teachers use ongoing assessment strategies to review and adapt their teaching practice. Teachers should now work together to develop consistent approaches to using questioning and higher order thinking skills to increase the level of challenge for children.
- Teachers are developing a learning and teaching policy as part of their school improvement plan. This work should help them plan consistently the structure of lessons across the school. In most lessons, teachers provide clear explanations and support children well to understand how to be successful. In a few lessons, children co-create success criteria. This approach should be developed further across the school. This will support children to self- and peer-assess their work more consistently. The headteacher is developing a learning and teaching infographic to support all teachers to plan consistently across all lessons.

- In almost all lessons, children receive helpful oral feedback on their effort and engagement with learning. In strong examples, teachers provide children with helpful verbal feedback about the progress they are making. All teachers make regular checks for understanding. In a few lessons, teachers provide clear written feedback that focuses on strengths and outlines what children need to do to improve. The headteacher should now ensure that this approach is more consistent across the school.
- All teachers use digital technologies well to enhance the learning experiences for children. For example, children access information through scanning digital codes, use apps to support learning in numeracy and develop skills when using software in the expressive arts. Older children take notes when watching digital texts, transferring information to support them in other areas of the curriculum.
- Younger children have regular opportunities to engage in play-based activities. Staff at the early stages reflect regularly on how to embed play across a multi-stage class. They provide a wide range of play-based activities that support children's literacy, numeracy and fine-motor skills. They plan for free-play sessions to support children to develop their communication and social skills. Interactions between staff and children are helpful, supportive and respectful. They are keen to develop further play experiences that support children's cognitive and problem-solving skills through a STEM approach. A next step would be for staff to engage with professional learning, using for example, national practice guidance or research-based approaches, to continue to develop age and stage appropriate experiences.
- The headteacher has created an annual calendar to ensure a consistent approach to summative assessment across the school. Teachers at the early stages plan ongoing assessment opportunities in addition to regular diagnostic assessments. The headteacher should continue to support all teachers to reflect on and analyse the information gathered as a result of assessments. They should build upon the strong approach at the early stages. This will support all teaching staff to identify clearly where children require support and challenge within their learning. Teachers have identified accurately the need to review assessment procedures in reading and maths to ensure they have a clear picture of children's progress and next steps in learning.
- The headteacher meets with teachers three times a year to discuss children's progress and attainment. Teachers are increasing their confidence when using national Benchmarks to evidence children's progress and provide support for those not on track with their learning. They take part in cluster moderation to develop further their confidence in understanding and applying national standards. This is an area of work they should continue to develop with colleagues across the authority. The headteacher should now work with teachers to use evidence of children's learning more effectively to support children's attainment at each level. This will continue to support them to strengthen the reliability of their professional judgements about the progress children make at each level.

## 2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- Teachers use well a range of local authority frameworks to plan lessons progressively for all curriculum areas. They work together regularly when planning learning experiences within topics or themes. They take account of their local community to ensure children's learning experiences are relevant and reflect the local context.
- Teachers have developed curriculum pathways to support their teaching in multi-stage classes. They plan by bundling experiences and outcomes together to create progressive programmes of learning. These pathways cover a wide range of curriculum areas over a three-year period. They use their knowledge of children well to make sound decisions about which subjects should be taught discretely. Teachers have plans to develop pathways further by linking them to their work on children's rights.
- Teachers plan for the teaching of food and health within a three-year programme as part of the theme 'Being My Best'. Teachers have developed a positive partnership with Aberdeenshire LIFE Education (ALEC) educators to support this aspect of the curriculum. Teachers also take account of the local context when looking at food and health, specifically exploring the impact of farming in the local community. For example, all children have the opportunity to visit a farm with staff also linking with farming events at Aden Park in Mintlaw. The Gardening Club involves all children across the year with planned curriculum learning in food, health and social subjects. Teachers' planning includes intergeneration links with the involvement of parents and grandparents. Children sell produce at various events, with children developing skills in managing money. They improve their social skills when sharing information about the produce they have grown with visitors to their community cafe. As a result, children develop confidence and transfer skills in literacy and numeracy well to this real-life situation. Children, the headteacher and teachers have recognised the need to build on this through regular, well-planned practical food handling experiences.
- The school works with a range of partners to enhance their curriculum. This includes a Youth Music Tutor for a music project through digital devices and Active School Coordinator for P7 play leader training. Staff have developed strong links with parents as partners to support aspects of the curriculum such as expressive arts.
- All children benefit from two hours of physical education (PE) each week. Class teachers deliver this through daily PE skills in addition to discrete teaching of PE. Children enjoy working with their peers across their houses for their morning PE. Teachers should continue to review this approach to ensure all children receive two hours of high-quality PE each week.
- All children learn French. Teachers use progressive pathways well, building on children's prior learning. In P5 to P7, children learn Mandarin as their third language.
- Teachers have developed well their approach to the teaching of music. They use a progressive programme effectively to ensure children at all stages experience high-quality learning in this area.



## 2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- Most parents feel comfortable approaching the school if they have questions or concerns. They talk positively about the school and appreciate the open, caring and supportive approach from the headteacher and staff team.
- Parents enjoy opportunities to be involved in the school with most feeling involved in helping with the work of the Parent Council. They lead a range of fundraising activities to purchase resources that support children's learning and enhance their experiences. They plan a range of events that provide social opportunities for the community. Parents play a vital role in facilitating children's experiences which enhances children's leadership and decision-making skills.
- Teachers communicate regularly through newsletters, consultations and reports about children's learning and progress. Parents appreciate this regular information to help them to support their child's learning at home. Opportunities to take part in school events such as performances and open days allow parents to have a better understanding of their child's experiences in school. A minority of parents are unsure how their views contribute to school improvement.

## 2.1 Safeguarding

- The school submitted self-evaluation information related to child protection and safeguarding. Inspectors discussed this information with relevant staff and, where appropriate, children. In addition, inspectors examined a sample of safeguarding documentation. Areas for development have been agreed with the school and the education authority.



### 3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

good

This indicator focuses on the impact of the school's approach to wellbeing which underpins children and young people's ability to achieve success. It highlights the need for policies and practices to be well grounded in current legislation and a shared understanding of the value of every individual. A clear focus on ensuring wellbeing entitlements and protected characteristics supports all learners to maximise their successes and achievements. The themes are:

- wellbeing
- fulfilment of statutory duties
- inclusion and equality

- Across the school, staff place a strong focus on supporting and improving children's wellbeing. They know children, their families and the community very well. Parents talk very positively about staff's knowledge of children and the warm and nurturing ethos they have created across the school. Relationships between staff, children and families are a strength of the school.
- The headteacher leads effectively the focus on developing children's understanding of themselves and others as learners. She places a high value on children's views and improving their ability to self-reflect and develop skills to manage their wellbeing. Staff use a range of resources and draw upon the expertise of visiting specialists to improve children's awareness of their own emotions and needs. Children are increasing their confidence in using reflective journals to identify clearly their strengths and areas they would like support in.
- Teachers use the language of the wellbeing indicators in lessons to support children's understanding in this area. Children self-reflect regularly using the indicators as a basis of their reflection and class discussions. This reflection is supported very well through relevant, age-appropriate examples for children to draw upon. Teachers use this information effectively to then support children further. They follow up children's reflections with individual discussions to ensure children are provided with the right support. As a result, almost all children feel safe, secure, respected and valued as part of the school community. Children talk confidently and articulately about their wellbeing and how to support the wellbeing of others. Differences are celebrated at Auchnagatt School and inclusion is an important strength of the school.
- Almost all children talk confidently about the ways the school supports them to be safe, healthy and active. They recognise the positive impact regular opportunities for physical activity in the school and physical play during breaks and lunchtime has on their own health. They enjoy the range of activities provided by staff within and beyond the school day including their mixed-stage approach to collaborative learning. The continued focus on being one community has a strong impact on establishing and sustaining positive relationships across the school. Children at all stages interact positively with each other during class time and play well together outdoors. Staff in the playground know children very well and provide effective support when required.
- Children take on leadership roles across a range of pupil participation groups. Children develop well their communication, teamwork and, for older children, leadership skills through participation in these groups. Being a member of these groups and committees contributes effectively to children's sense of wellbeing and agency. This approach is supporting children to develop a meaningful understanding of skills for learning, life and work. Teachers support all children very well who wish to try something new. Parents speak very positively about the nurturing approach of staff that helps to build children's confidence to take on new roles and

responsibilities. They recognise the impact of staff's supportive approach in encouraging and challenging children to explore a range of leadership opportunities.

- The school submitted information relating to compliance with the revised Nutritional Regulations 2020 and key duties as required by The Schools (Health Promotion and Nutrition) (Scotland) Act 2007. The Health and Nutrition Inspector (HNI) discussed this information with relevant staff and children. In addition, the HNI examined documentation relating to the effectiveness of whole school approaches to improving the health and wellbeing of children through food in school. A few areas for improvement have been agreed with the school and the school meals provider.
- Staff have a good understanding of their responsibilities and statutory duties related to wellbeing, equality, and inclusion. Senior leaders ensure systems and procedures are in place to meet statutory duties, which includes annual training on child protection. The headteacher monitors attendance closely and regularly across the school and overall attendance is above the national average. The headteacher links with appropriate partners and the local authority to provide bespoke support for children and families who are experiencing difficulties. There are no incidents of exclusion.
- All staff support children well, providing universal, group and individualised support where appropriate. For example, all teachers have created 'wow boxes' for their class. Children can self-select resources, such as screens and ear defenders, to help with their concentration. Children are improving their ability to make good choices about when these items are required. Led effectively by the headteacher, teachers create plans for children who require additional support for their learning. In these plans, they record individual targets, and the interventions children receive. They reflect the strengths and support needs of children with parents involved fully in the process. Teachers work effectively with support assistants to identify where they can provide group and individualised support. Support assistants engage positively with cluster training to develop their skills further. This additional support is having a positive impact on children's confidence when reading aloud and supporting their wellbeing.
- Staff plan and support a variety of transition events and link effectively with local nurseries and their two local secondary schools. Teachers visit children at nursery before they join P1 and use a buddy programme very well to support children's start to school. As a result, children settle well and are happy and confident at Auchnagatt School. Teachers link well with associated secondary schools to support children's P7 to S1 transition. Children have opportunities to visit their secondary schools and enjoy visits from the secondary school teachers throughout the school year. Staff plan effectively for children who would benefit from an enhanced transition. There is strong partnership working across the cluster. Senior leaders from five local primary schools plan well a shared residential trip to support children to develop relationships prior to joining secondary school.
- The headteacher and teachers lead weekly assemblies that develop children's understanding of equality, diversity and inclusion. This provides children with regular opportunities to learn about their rights and the rights of others. As a result, children are developing their skills and confidence to address discrimination and intolerance. Children now need to be supported further to develop their learning about diversity and being a global citizen in a progressive way across the curriculum. The Rights Respecting Committee are well established and could support this work effectively across the school.

### 3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

**satisfactory**

This indicator focuses on the school's success in achieving the best possible outcomes for all learners. Success is measured in attainment across all areas of the curriculum and through the school's ability to demonstrate learners' achievements in relation to skills and attributes. Continuous improvement or sustained high standards over time is a key feature of this indicator. The themes are:

- attainment in literacy and numeracy
- attainment over time
- overall quality of learners' achievement
- equity for all learners

#### Attainment in literacy and numeracy

- Currently, the school has small numbers of children at each stage so each theme will be written in overall statements.
- Overall, most children across P1, P4 and P7 achieved expected Curriculum for Excellence levels in numeracy and mathematics, reading and listening and talking in session 2022-23. The majority of children achieved expected levels in writing. Children's attainment in writing has been significantly impacted by periods of lockdown and school closures. The staff team are now in a strong place to increase children's attainment.
- Most children who require additional support with their learning make good progress in literacy and numeracy.

#### Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, most children make good progress in reading and listening and talking from prior levels of attainment. In writing, the majority of children are making satisfactory progress. Staff should now prioritise children's attainment and increased progress in writing.

#### Listening and talking

- Overall, most children are making good progress in listening and talking. They listen well to instructions and explanations from staff and respond appropriately when working on tasks with their peers. Younger children share confidently their ideas and opinions when working as a group with the teacher. Older children prepare presentations and share these confidently at assemblies and in class. Children are not able to identify the skills they require to deliver successfully a range of presentations, including debates.

#### Reading

- Overall, most children are making good progress in reading. Younger children use their knowledge of letters to sound out simple words. They enjoy stories and can retell the main events from a familiar text. Older children skim and scan to find information from a text. They are not confident in providing detailed evidence to support their answers. They would benefit from learning about inferential questions and strategies to support them to answer these questions accurately. Most older children can talk about their favourite genres. They are keen to re-establish the school library to access a wider range of texts for personal reading. They would benefit from reading aloud more regularly to develop further their expression.

#### Writing

- Overall, the majority of children are making satisfactory progress in writing. Younger children form letters correctly, using spaces and simple punctuation to structure basic sentences. Older children use increasingly ambitious vocabulary to enhance their writing. They include, where

appropriate, subject specific vocabulary to engage the reader. The majority of older children use punctuation correctly, understand how to use figurative language to add detail to texts and spell familiar and unfamiliar words accurately. They would benefit from regular handwriting practice to improve the presentation of their written work. In addition, older children need to write more regularly and at length for a wider range of genres to understand more clearly the features of different written genres.

### **Numeracy and mathematics**

- Overall, most children are making satisfactory progress in numeracy and mathematics. There are gaps in children's learning across all organisers. Teachers should revisit concepts more regularly to support children to develop faster recall of core skills.

### **Number, money and measure**

- Most younger children recognise, write and use numbers up to 10. As children move through the levels, they partition numbers accurately and identify the value of each digit within the number. They compare the sizes of fractions, demonstrating the greater the number of equal parts, the smaller the share. The majority of older children can read, write and order whole numbers to 1,000,000. They can explain the link between a digit, its place and its value. Most children at first and second levels require support to accurately solve multi-step problems. They need to develop further their knowledge of fractions, decimals and percentages.

### **Shape, position and movement**

- Almost all younger children recognise common two-dimensional shapes. They create patterns and describe the shapes used. The majority of older children can identify three-dimensional objects and describe a few features. They can identify lines of symmetry in two-dimensional shapes. Older children need to develop further their knowledge of three-dimensional objects, including their properties and nets.

### **Information handling**

- Across all stages, the majority of children have explored the variety of ways data can be presented. The majority of children can extract information from different data sets but they do not demonstrate confidence in this area. Children should develop skills in using technology to display a variety of different kinds of collected data. They now need to link their learning to real-life contexts.

### **Attainment over time**

- From the school's evidence of attainment over time, staff can show that most children are making good progress in literacy and numeracy at early and first levels. The school's evidence demonstrates that the pace of children's progress decreases as children move into second level. Teachers are improving their reliability of the judgements about the progress children are making. The headteacher should continue to support teachers to analyse more rigorously the evidence against national Benchmarks. In particular, she should support teachers to evaluate more accurately the progress children make in writing and numeracy. This should continue to improve the consistency of teacher judgements across the school.

### **Overall quality of learners' achievements**

- All children take part weekly in school committees which helps them to develop skills for learning, life and work. Teachers review regularly children's participation in the committees to ensure this is meaningful. Staff celebrate children's achievements through assemblies, in class and by displaying them on the achievement wall. Staff are beginning to track children's achievements. The planned development by the DYW Committee of a skills passport should support this work.

- All children benefit from opportunities to take part in a local STEM festival. They develop scientific skills through the workshops as well as working with a wider group of peers from different schools. Children in P5 to P7 took part in an Arts project to celebrate the anniversaries of local organisations. They were able to apply their musical and artistic skills to create a tapestry and music recording. Children in P5 to P7 take part annually in the Aden Dig. This archaeological dig supports children to increase their knowledge of historical artefacts.
- Staff and children host a monthly community café for the local community. Children in P5 to P7 take orders, serve food and manage money. They also sell the produce grown by the Gardening Club. They contribute successfully to local learning for sustainability projects such as the community Soup and Sweet and Buchan Beginning to Bloom. These experiences support children very well to apply their skills to real-life contexts.

### **Equity for all learners**

- The school strives to ensure the cost of the school day is minimised through providing a uniform recycling service. The Parent Council supports the school financially to ensure the annual school pantomime trip is fully funded.
- The headteacher uses PEF effectively to support identified groups and individuals to practise spelling and numerical recall. Staff draw upon the expertise of cluster colleagues to select these interventions. Children engage regularly with online, adaptive resources to support, practise and revise spelling and numeracy skills. These children make very good progress in these focused areas with a few accelerating progress and closing existing learning gaps. Children who require nurturing support are provided with well-planned interventions which help them to develop skills to manage their feelings and emotions. This approach is supporting children very well to engage positively in their learning and build and sustain friendships across the school.
- The headteacher supports children to mix with a wider group of peers across five schools through the planned residential trip for P7. She draws upon the Aberdeenshire Educational Trust to provide financial support for those who require it. This supports inclusion and ensures that no child is at risk of missing out.

## Explanation of terms of quantity

The following standard Education Scotland terms of quantity are used in this report:

All	100%
Almost all	91%-99%
Most	75%-90%
Majority	50%-74%
Minority/less than half	15%-49%
A few	less than 15%

Other quantitative terms used in this report are to be understood as in common English usage.