

Summarised inspection findings

Deshar Primary School and Nursery Class

The Highland Council

2 July 2019

Key contextual information

Deshar Primary School is located in The Highland Council. The school serves the area of Boat of Garten which is situated in the Cairngorm National Park. There are two classes at the primary stages and a nursery class for 14 children. The headteacher has been in post for two years and is also the headteacher of a nearby primary school. The current roll is 31. Around 20% of the children attend the school through placing requests.

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 whole staff team is committed to achieving the best outcomes for the children at Deshar Primary School. The headteacher has been in post for two years. In that time she has established a new team at the primary stages. Members of the staff team all recognise that there is scope to improve the school to ensure children experience high quality learning and teaching and increase attainment across the curriculum. Led by the headteacher, and effectively supported by the principal teacher, there are effective approaches to self-evaluation in place. The staff know the children and their families very well. They are very aware of the needs and interests of all children, including those who face barriers to learning or who have challenges in their lives. Staff are reflective, and increasingly work as a team to manage and plan change. During the inspection the headteacher and staff actively engaged in professional engagement and learning with inspectors. They have a clear and shared vision for the school and are determined to achieve success in their efforts to do their best for the children.
- There has been a clear focus on developing a welcoming and caring ethos. The headteacher leads by example, modelling high aspirations, standards and expectations. As a result, there has been considerable improvement in children's attitude and behaviour. This is remarked upon by visiting teachers and partners. This energy now needs to focus on improving the curriculum and learning and teaching at all stages. The school is now well placed to progress with planned change and improvement. The headteacher and staff feel empowered to lead the school in change with confidence and increased awareness of the need to consider the unique setting of the school in its community. School leaders plan collegiate learning time well, and plan to work in tandem with their cluster school to share ideas and workload. The headteacher and her team are eager to develop their engagement with partners, including parents in developments and ensuring they have a voice in the way ahead.
- The headteacher and principal teacher have worked well together to establish routines and expectations across the primary stages. Class teachers embrace change well, and are well placed to work collaboratively in the change process. They recognise the opportunities arising for them and the children across the school to be more involved in leading improvement across school life.

- The headteacher recognises that as the school continues its improvement journey, there is a need to consider short and long-term approaches to monitoring that change happens, and that team endeavours have a positive impact on outcomes for all children. Staff understand the need to focus on priorities and avoid diversions.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

satisfactory

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

- Children learn in two multi-stage classrooms. Staff have worked hard to improve the learning environment and update pedagogy and resources. The school team is committed to developing a culture of respect and high expectations. As a result, classrooms are now more conducive to learning. Visitors to the school report on the improved behaviour and attitude of children in the school. Most children listen well during lessons and work well together when asked to work in pairs. They understand the purpose of their tasks and most are motivated to complete activities in the given time. All children need to improve the quality of the presentation of their written work. The majority of children are increasingly confident to participate in group and class activities. This includes participation in school assemblies and shows. In this more settled learning environment the school is well placed to increase opportunities for children to take more responsibility in their learning and in the life of the school. Children are developing skills and confidence using digital tools. For example, older children enjoyed writing book reviews using digital text and images. A few children also demonstrated skills using a search engine to collect facts and information about space.
- Children's learning is enhanced by the increasingly effective use of the school grounds and local woodlands. This is a central feature of school life and motivates children in their learning. All children enjoy learning outdoors every week. In addition the school dedicates one morning every week to forest schools activities.
- Most lessons are well-planned to ensure learning and activities meet the needs of all learners. Children enjoy whole class lessons followed by differentiated activities. In the best lessons examples and instructions are clear. In most lessons teachers make effective use of questioning to promote children's thinking and check their understanding. We have asked staff to ensure that children do not spend too much time listening to instructions for others. Teachers take care to share what is to be learned and how children will know they have been successful. In the multi-stage classes there is scope to reduce the number of learning intentions and success criteria shared with children across the school day. Too much use of professional language is affecting the clarity of the learning and teaching. We have asked staff to reflect on the number of worksheets and templates that children are asked to complete and use each week.
- A range of assessments is used across literacy and numeracy. There is scope for all assessment to feature as an integral part of planning learning and teaching. Staff should consider consistent ways of storing and presenting children's work to enable them and their parents to see progress across the curriculum.
- The new staff team is working towards establishing whole school approaches to planning, tracking and monitoring. They use a range of approaches to plan literacy, numeracy and interdisciplinary learning (IDL). They recognise the need to consider long term planning, to

provide an overview of planned learning for all children at each stage. As this work progresses, staff should take account of national guidance, and take care to ensure agreed processes are manageable.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- The headteacher and staff have identified the need to improve the curriculum. Children access progression in literacy and numeracy. This is not yet available across the Broad General Education (BGE). Staff should take prompt action to review planning and class timetables to ensure children experience appropriate learning experiences across the curriculum on a regular basis. There are considerable gaps in children's learning across the BGE. Staff should make effective use of support materials and guidance available from The Highland Council to progress this work.
- The headteacher has clear plans to engage with staff, children, parents and partners to refresh the school's curriculum rationale. This will help identify the unique features of the school community and support the implementation of progressive, relevant and coherent learning pathways.
- There is considerable scope for the whole staff team to work together to plan exciting and relevant contexts for learning which motivate learners and engage them as 21st Century citizens of Scotland. The school is well placed to embed children's rights, developing the young workforce and sustainability within these refreshed pathways and contexts.
- Children are highly motivated by the regular opportunities they have to learn and play outdoors. They benefit from learning a range of skills in the school grounds and local forest. This provides a good platform from which to develop a unique curriculum rationale, which takes full account of the school's location within a major centre for tourism in Scotland. Staff were very receptive to support and challenge around the curriculum from inspectors. Staff told us they feel empowered to be innovative and creative, whilst ensuring all children experience progression and depth in their learning.
- Parents interviewed during the inspection are eager to be involved in this activity and keen to bring their own knowledge of the area, and the world of work, to the children's learning.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- Parents interviewed are very happy with the work of the school. They appreciate that all staff know their children very well and support individual interests and talents. Parents find school staff approachable and caring. Parents told us that they are impressed by the school's approach to ensuring children are active. This includes the promotion of cycling and walking to school. Parents support this activity by ensuring cycle paths are clear and safe. They support the school in a range of ways. Regular fundraising has helped the school purchase resources, including equipment for science and technology activities. The parent council uses funds to ensure all children participate in trips and residential experiences. They also contribute to annual visits to local pantomimes.
- There is a strong commitment across the school to learning outdoors. This is an important feature of school life for all learners and their families. Parents talk about children's increased confidence and enthusiasm for learning when it takes place outdoors. The whole school community recognises learning outdoors as a central feature of children's experiences across the curriculum. Parents are keen to be involved in refreshing the school's curriculum rationale and in considering relevant contexts for learning which take account of unique setting of the school. Parents would welcome more information about how they can support the school and engage in skills for learning life and work. They recognise the breadth of opportunities for sharing information about the world of work from their own life experiences.
- School staff are eager for parents to become more involved in children's learning. Various attempts to promote effective sharing of learning through homework have not yet proved successful. For example, staff are keen to promote a love of reading across the school. They welcome increased parental participation in reading with their children. A few children told us that they did not read at home and that they would like to read more with their parents. To support improvements in attainment and achievement, parents and staff should work together to increase the opportunities and frequency of parental engagement in learning.

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 that need to be addressed as a matter for urgency.

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

- Led by the headteacher, the whole staff team is committed to ensuring that children learn and thrive in a caring ethos where children and staff are valued and respected and where relationships are strong. There is a strong emphasis on the wellbeing of children and their families. All staff know children and their families very well. Parents tell us that they too feel valued, and welcomed at school. They have confidence and trust in the work of the school.
- Children have regular opportunities to engage in learning and discussion of wellbeing. They understand the wellbeing indicators, and should be eased away from just referring to 'SHANARRI' in order to better support children's deeper learning about wellbeing.
- Led by the headteacher staff have worked hard to improve the school culture and ethos. They have high expectations for children's behaviour. As a result, the school community reports that children are more settled in their learning and behaviour has improved. Children talk with confidence about what respect means to them, including respect for self, others, teachers and the environment. They demonstrate respect to their classmates in school and outdoors. They are increasingly willing to share and listen to others. This is supporting improved learning across the school. Children feel safe and nurtured in school.
- All children are included in the life of the school. This includes all outdoor learning and trips and excursions. Staff and the parent council ensure no child misses out due to financial issues. Children who need extra support with their learning are well supported in class and in a quiet withdrawal space in the library.
- All children are regularly active. They enjoy regular opportunities to play and learn outdoors. They participate in weekly active play, well supported by The Highland Council officers. Children look forward to these sessions and talk about the sense of wellbeing and fun they experience. Staff report that play is having a positive impact on children's social and emotional development. The school is well supported by Active Schools, and a range of local outdoor education partners. Children are experiencing a range of sports and clubs, and particularly enjoy shinty, football and orienteering. Children enjoy one hour of Physical Education (PE) from a specialist teacher each week. Class teachers also use the school grounds to support regular PE.
- There are a few opportunities for children to take responsibilities around the school and in class. This includes playground monitors and pupil council. Staff recognise the need to develop more opportunities for children to take responsibility in school life, and in their own learning. The planned improvements to the curriculum should include planned opportunities for children to develop skills as leaders.

- Led by the headteacher and well supported by the ASN teacher, the school complies and engages with appropriate statutory requirements and codes of practice. Clear and up to date Child's plans are in place for those who need one. Almost all parents are very happy with arrangements. This aspect of the work of the school is having a positive impact on the learning, safety and wellbeing of children who face challenges in their lives, and who need additional support.
- All learners are included in the life of the school. Almost all children feel well supported to do their best. There are no barriers to participation. Staff support children to understand and value diversity and are sensitive to the needs and circumstances of all children as they grow and develop. Effective partnership working in this area, has a positive impact on children who need support.

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

- There are small numbers of children at each stage of the school. Detailed attainment information is not provided here to preserve children's anonymity.
- Overall, the quality of children's attainment in literacy and numeracy is satisfactory. Most children are making satisfactory progress from their prior levels of attainment. Children who need additional support with their learning are making appropriate progress. Most children could achieve more. Children are not yet making sufficient progress across all curriculum areas.
- Over the last two years, there are emerging signs of improvement in children's attainment. Led by the headteacher, there has been a clearer focus on raising standards, and increasing the pace and quality of learning. Staff make effective use of a range of standardised assessments to support their professional judgement. They are gaining confidence in the moderation and assessment of children's work and progress. The school has implemented a tracking system that offers clear information about children's progress in literacy and numeracy. The school has identified the need to improve children's attainment, particularly in numeracy and mathematics.
- Most children working towards first level are predicted to achieve appropriate levels in literacy and English language. The majority are on track to achieve appropriate levels in numeracy and mathematics by June 2019. By P7, the majority of children are achieving appropriate levels in reading, writing and listening and talking. By P7, the majority are achieving appropriate levels in numeracy and mathematics. Across the school, children who face barriers in their learning make satisfactory progress.

Literacy and English language

Listening and talking

- The majority of children are confident and articulate. They enjoy talking to each other, staff and visitors about themselves, their favourite activities in and out of school, and their work tasks in school. Across the multi-stage classes, children are developing skills in listening to each other. Staff recognise the need to ensure younger and quieter children are always included, and their voice is heard. In class discussions across the school, all children should be encouraged to actively participate. Younger children are developing skills in sharing ideas with each other, for example predicting what happens next in a well-loved story. Too many listening and talking lessons are followed by low level tasks, for example drawing, that do not challenge or extend children's skills. Most older children can express their views with confidence in class discussions. For example, they can give examples of what they understand by 'respect'. A few children do not actively participate in class and groups discussions.

Writing

- Across the school children have opportunities to write for a range of purposes. Most of the younger children enjoy regular personal writing. The majority are developing skills in simple punctuation and sentence structure. They can write simple instructions in sequence, for example how to get ready for lunch. Children working towards first level are beginning to understand how to write notes from watching a video clip. Older children write well describing characters in texts. They particularly enjoy writing extended imaginative stories and scripts. Children need more opportunity to engage with writing poetry. To improve attainment and standards in writing children need more frequent opportunities to write at length, and be supported to take a pride in the presentation of their work. Children would also enjoy more use of digital tools in their writing tasks. Improvements to the curriculum will support children in having more relevant and meaningful writing experiences.

Reading

- The majority of children are making satisfactory progress in their reading. Children have access to a wide range of texts, including picture books, novels and non-fiction resources. The school library offers a quiet place to read. Younger children are successful matching sounds of words in simple texts. The majority of children working towards first level can read new texts aloud in class with confidence. Children working towards second level are developing skills in finding information and the majority can identify subtle clues in a text. They are learning to use information from texts to inform their writing about given topics. A few children talk about their love of reading, but overall, children feel this is an area in which they can improve. A few children told us that they found it hard to access books they liked and would like offered a wider range, including graphic novels. Children told us they would like to read more with adults, including at home with family members. Children could talk about a few authors but were lacking in confidence when talking about books they had read.

Numeracy and Mathematics

Number, money and measure

- Children working towards first level are developing skills in using the four operations. The majority answer simple calculations accurately. They sequence numbers and days of the week accurately. By P7 children achieve success in a range of numeracy tasks, including multiplying whole numbers by two digit numbers, and calculating the volume of 3D objects with given measurements. They accurately measure the perimeter and area of compound shapes.

Shape, position and movement

- Children in P1-P3 have fun outdoors creating symmetrical pictures with chalk in the playground. They can mark their drawings with lines of symmetry. They enjoy taking photographs of their work and talking about their achievements indoors. Children working towards first level confidently name simple 2D shapes. Children in the older class are developing skills in interpreting maps and compass points in orienteering activities outdoors. A few children can complete the course with confidence and in good time. However, tasks need to better meet the needs of individual children across this multi-stage class. By P7 the majority of children plot coordinates on a grid accurately.

Information handling

- Across the school children would benefit from more opportunity to develop skills in information handling which are well matched to their age and stage of development. Children are not confident in this area. There is scope for children to make use of digital tools and information in the development of skills in analysis.
- Across numeracy and mathematics, children need more opportunity to demonstrate and apply their knowledge and skills in real life and unfamiliar settings.

Achievement

- Children's achievements are celebrated in displays around the school and at assemblies. Children across the school enjoy participating in a range of fundraising, sporting and cultural activities. There is also a strong emphasis on children learning about and respecting the environment. They are developing skills in food preparation and cooking supported by a local chef. This is also contributing to children beginning to learn skills for learning, life and work. Children also enjoy sharing their achievements out of school. Their achievements are recorded, and staff monitor children's participation. Staff work together to support all children to access activities. As they develop the curriculum, staff should build on this to have a clearer focus on the skills children are developing, and that they are aware of these.
- The school is in receipt of a small amount of Pupil Equity Funding. This has been used to increase support staff hours to facilitate enhanced support for individual learners. This is having a positive impact on children's readiness to learn.

Choice of QI: 2.4 Personalised Support

- Universal support
- Targeted support
- Removal of barriers to learning

- Staff know children and their families very well. Individual needs are identified and steps taken to plan appropriate learning and support. As discussed earlier, staff have worked hard to improve children's behaviour. This has had an impact on the learning environment, which is mostly calm and purposeful. Children are at the centre of all planning for change and improvement. Across the school, learning targets in place and staff refer to them during learning and teaching.
- Staff work hard to provide differentiated learning. Again, as they improve learning pathways and the curriculum, there is scope to refresh approaches to ensure able children are suitably challenged, and that children do not face repetition or duplication in the multi-stage classes.
- Effective systems are in place to identify the needs of children who need additional support with their learning. The Additional Support Needs (ASN) teacher takes responsibility for meetings and the records and reports for children moving up the staged intervention ladder. There may be scope to consider how some of her time can be freed up to support staff across the wider range of ASN roles. Children are involved in decision-making as appropriate. Meetings with parents and other adults are well planned, and recorded. There is evidence that children receiving support are making steady progress in their learning in literacy and numeracy. There is also evidence that an increased number of children are more positive about learning, more settled, and ready to engage.
- It may be time to reflect on the use of the morning check-in time. We have asked staff to consider the relevance of this for all children at all stages. The time could be used more effectively in learning and teaching.
- The school works well with key partners to support children and families, provide learning for staff, and create an inclusive environment.

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.