

# Summarised inspection findings

**Auchtermuchty Primary School**

Fife Council

29 August 2023

## Key contextual information

Auchtermuchty Primary School is a mainstream school situated in the village of Auchtermuchty, Fife. The school roll is 146 children split across six classes. The school has experienced significant recent staffing challenges, with the headteacher being the seventh in the last ten years. The headteacher has been in post for two years. Approximately half of the teaching staff are relatively new to the school. Thirty six percent of children live within Social Index of Multiple Deprivations (SIMD) 4, with sixty three percent living within SIMD 7. The school currently benefits from additional staffing provided by the local authority. The local authority supports additional professional learning for staff.

### 1.3 Leadership of change

**satisfactory**

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

- In recent years, Auchtermuchty Primary School has experienced significant changes in leadership and staffing. Prior to the headteacher's appointment, this restricted the school's capacity for improvement. Systems and processes for improving the school's work lacked structure and self-evaluation was not an embedded feature within the school. Since the headteacher joined the school, she has driven forward school improvement. She has a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. She is committed to implementing well-considered and sustainable change for the benefit of the whole school community. With the support of the senior leadership team, the headteacher has streamlined improvement priorities to manage strategically the pace of change. As a result, improvement planning is now focused better on improving outcomes for all children. Strategic priorities are having a positive impact on the school's capacity to improve.
- Senior leaders, in partnership with staff and learners, recently refreshed the school's values. The values are child-friendly and staff use these effectively to set expectations. Children who model the school values well are celebrated at assemblies. Senior leaders now need to develop consistently high expectations for the standard and quality of children's work, behaviour and relationships.
- Senior leaders manage change well. On appointment, the headteacher identified a need to establish quickly a calmer, more purposeful learning environment across the school. She has led the staff team successfully to promptly put in place approaches to learning, which have resulted in significant improvement across the school. Senior leaders, teachers and staff work well together as a team. The whole staff team is committed to improving outcomes for all children. Staff are developing a shared understanding of children's individual needs and personal circumstances.
- Teachers engage well with professional learning to develop more consistent approaches to teaching and learning. All staff are committed to ensuring every child achieves as best they can. Teachers engage with colleagues from a neighbouring school for moderation activities

and to share good practice. A few teachers have taken on leadership roles, which has contributed to improving approaches to writing across the school. Senior leaders undertake quality assurance processes, including classroom observations and jotter monitoring, to support teachers to reflect on professional standards.

- Children's progress in learning is monitored effectively through regular meetings between senior leaders, teachers and staff. Teachers use a range of assessment information to monitor children's progress and identify those learners who require more support or challenge with their learning. Senior leaders should ensure these meetings support further improvements in children's attainment.
- Staff and senior leaders demonstrate a strong understanding of the socio-economic and cultural context of children and the local community. Senior leaders use a range of data to identify a rationale for Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) spend. Senior leaders use PEF to improve approaches to writing and to provide social and emotional support for an identified group of children. Processes to evaluate the impact of PEF interventions are at an early stage. Senior leaders should continue to develop ways they can evidence and evaluate the impact of PEF initiatives on closing poverty-related gaps.
- Children in the upper school enjoy reading with, and being buddies to, children in the nursery and P1. Pupil leadership groups are providing children with a meaningful way to contribute to the wider work of the school. Children contribute to aspects of quality assurance through pupil focus groups. Children are rightly proud of these leadership roles and are keen to continue to be involved in decision-making and change. Senior leaders should continue to develop leadership opportunities to allow an increased number of children to be involved in the work of the school.
- Parents contribute to self-evaluation through a range of questionnaires. The school engages well with a range of local partners who support valuable curricular experiences. Senior leaders should now engage all children, parents, partners, and the wider community more fully in the work of the school, including self-evaluation activities.

## 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

- The school's values underpin the work of the headteacher, staff and children. Staff are starting to use the school values to create a positive learning environment across the school. Most learners are beginning to understand the values and almost all children are friendly and welcoming. They interact positively with staff, visitors and each other. Most children talk confidently about their learning and their wider contributions to the life of the school.
- Across the school, most children engage appropriately in planned learning. Senior leaders and teachers are working together to develop a shared understanding of the features of effective learning. This is leading to improvements in planned learning, which motivates children more effectively in their learning. Teachers should now increase the pace of learning and ensure all lessons are sufficiently challenging.
- Teachers are developing their use of feedback to support children to understand their progress and next steps in their learning. Most children are able to talk about how teacher feedback helps them to identify where they have been successful in their learning and what their next steps are. However, children are not given sufficient opportunities to build on what they have learned. They would benefit from more opportunities to act on teachers' feedback and reflect on how this has helped improve their learning. This will support children better to understand what they need to do further to improve.
- In most lessons, teachers explain the purpose of children's learning sufficiently well. Teachers' use of questioning to check children's understanding is variable across the school. They need to develop their use of questioning more consistently across the school to support children to know better what they are learning and why.
- Teachers use a range of assessments to evaluate children's progress. They are developing their skills and confidence in using these to support their professional judgments. In most classes, teachers use assessments of children's work well to inform next steps in children's learning.
- Teachers engage well in professional learning and collegiate activities. These are supporting them to develop a shared understanding of national standards. Senior leaders hold weekly meetings with a few randomly chosen children to discuss their progress. This is helping children to develop their understanding of how well they are progressing in their learning.
- Teachers plan learning appropriately using the Curriculum for Excellence experiences and outcomes. They use local authority progression pathways to plan learning in literacy, numeracy and expressive arts. This consistent approach supports most children to make satisfactory progress in their learning. Teachers make effective use of use outdoor learning,

religious and moral education (RME) and interdisciplinary learning (IDL) planners that are unique to the school's context. They created these planners with partners from the local community.

- Teachers use a local authority tool to track and monitor children's progress. Senior leaders have complemented this tool by developing a tracker specific to the context of the school. Teachers are building their confidence in using these to track and monitor children's progress. Senior leaders are building a range of reliable data, which illustrates how well children are progressing across all stages in the school. Approaches to assessing, moderating and tracking progress are supporting teachers to become more accurate when making professional judgements about children's progress and attainment.
- Children's progress is discussed at termly tracking and monitoring meetings. Senior leaders and teachers use these meetings to measure effectively how well each child is progressing. Tracking meetings help teachers consider what adaptations or interventions could be employed to support children to make improved progress. Teachers should continue to develop their capabilities in collating and analysing data on children's progress.
- Support for learning staff help teachers to develop and deliver a range of approaches to meet children's needs better. These include bespoke individual targeted sessions on a few afternoons each week. Staff need to consider the effectiveness of these approaches in ensuring all children's needs are met as fully as possible. They should review the approaches used for children who require most support to access and maintain their engagement in their learning.
- Teachers are not yet sufficiently familiar with national practice guidance in developing approaches to play. They need to engage in professional learning to develop their understanding of how children learn progressively through planned, purposeful play. Children would benefit from time to explore, research and engage in learning contexts and areas of interest through play.

## 2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- Teachers make use of local authority and school progression frameworks to plan across the curriculum. They have utilised community links well to develop a progressive outdoor learning pathway. Local history groups have collaborated with the school to develop a contextualised IDL planner. This is ensuring the local environment and historical sites of interest enrich children's learning experiences.
- As identified by senior leaders, teachers should ensure opportunities are provided for children to build on prior learning. This will support progression for all children. Children would benefit from more opportunities to apply learning in real life contexts to develop their skills for learning, life and work.
- Children have access to books in class libraries which contain a range of age and stage appropriate texts. Children would benefit from greater use of the school library. This would support them to access a wider range of texts.
- Children are receiving their entitlement to two hours of physical education per week. Children at all stages learn French. Older children are beginning to learn Spanish.
- Senior leaders should now work with the whole school community to create a curriculum rationale which takes account of all the factors that make Auchtermuchty Primary School unique. This will support the development of shared aspirations and a clear understanding of how everyone can work together to achieve these.

## 2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- Parents across the school community are keen to support the school. Parent volunteers support activities, which enhance children's learning experiences. Parents share their views on parental workshops, whole school performances and developments in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. Senior leaders should now consider how to engage all parents more effectively in supporting the school's improvement agenda. Engaging parents more regularly in identifying, and taking forward, school improvement priorities will support parents to contribute more meaningfully to improving the work of the school. A useful first step would be to engage parents in reviewing the rationale for the school curriculum.
- A minority of parents do not appreciate fully the steps taken by staff to ensure the school is a safe place for all learners. Senior leaders need to work closely with parents to build parents' confidence in the systems and approaches taken to keep children safe at school.

## 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. At the time of the inspection, there were no identified areas for development.



### 3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

satisfactory

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

- On appointment, the headteacher identified promptly the need to make the school a safer, calmer place where children can learn. She took necessary steps to put systems and procedures in place which support staff to meet children's needs better. The headteacher recognised the need to review the school's values. Staff are starting to embed the revised values into the ethos and culture across the school. This is supporting almost all children to understand expectations of their behaviour when in school.
- Relationships across the school are mostly positive. Senior leaders have established teachers' use of six key phrases when talking with children. As a result, teachers are creating a shared language across the school. This supports children to make better choices. Staff are developing their understanding of their role in improving children's health and wellbeing. Senior leaders now need to support staff further to ensure they all have a consistent, clear understanding of how they contribute to monitoring and improving children's wellbeing.
- Teachers and pupil support assistants provide intensive support to help a few children understand better how to regulate their behaviour. This support is having an impact in supporting these children to manage their emotions more positively and engage better in their learning. For a few children, this support is not yet having sufficient impact. Situations where these children become distressed or dysregulated can have a negative impact on the climate for learning and teaching across the school. Senior leaders, with the continuing support of the local authority, need to develop further their approaches to supporting these children to improve their wellbeing and engage better in their learning.
- Staff are beginning to use a range of interventions to support children requiring additional support to understand better their feelings and those of others. These interventions include restorative conversations, sensory boxes and visual timetables. A majority of teachers are at the early stages of incorporating these approaches into everyday classroom practice to benefit all children. Most children are beginning to take more responsibility for regulating their emotions. They are expressing their feelings in more prosocial ways. Where any disagreements do occur, most children are beginning to understand better how to resolve these themselves.
- The wellbeing indicators and children's rights are highlighted well at school assemblies. However, staff are not yet referring consistently to the wellbeing indicators or children's rights in classes. Children should have more opportunities to develop an understanding of their wellbeing and what actions they can take to improve this. They also need to explore their rights, and how these impact upon their lives in school and beyond. Staff should promote the language of the wellbeing indicators regularly throughout their work. They should develop further their understanding of children's rights and what actions they can take to protect and promote these.

- Senior leaders have a clear understanding of their responsibilities in fulfilling statutory duties in developing wellbeing, equalities and inclusion. They maintain an overview of children's additional support needs across the school. This supports senior leaders to identify those children requiring additional support. Staff have put in place plans for all children requiring additional support to meet their needs, including individualised targets. Children are involved in setting their targets, which are reviewed regularly. The school needs to ensure these plans support children to make improved progress in their learning.
- Children learn about equality and diversity through lessons in RME. For example, children explore their understanding of faiths and cultures through celebrations and events. Staff now need to develop further the school's curriculum to ensure this provides children with progressive opportunities to develop their understanding of issues relating to equality, diversity and difference.
- Teachers use outdoor spaces effectively to deliver physical education and to support children receiving additional support. For example, when exploring nature in the common grounds adjacent to the school. They should now develop further their use of the school's outdoor spaces to support children better to develop their wellbeing.
- Senior leaders should identify and adopt creative personalised approaches to ensure that any children on part-time placements receive their full entitlement to education.

## 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

- Overall attainment in literacy and numeracy is satisfactory. In session 2021-22 most children at early and first level and the majority at second level achieved the appropriate Curriculum for Excellence levels in literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics. Across all levels, a minority of children have the capacity to make better progress and achieve more.

### Attainment in literacy and English

- Across the school, the majority of children are making satisfactory progress from prior levels of attainment in listening and talking, reading and writing.

### Listening and talking

- Across the school, children are confident and eager to contribute their ideas. They would benefit from regular opportunities to develop their listening and talking skills with greater focus on progression.
- At early level, most children follow simple instructions and share ideas and experiences successfully within a small group. At first level, most children offer their ideas and own opinions confidently. A few children require support to listen well to others. At second level, most children offer their own viewpoint clearly and build on the contribution of others. Most can discuss confidently the skills required to present a topic in class.

### Reading

- At early level, most children recognise initial sounds and simple blends. They are building confidence in reading common words. At first level, most children select books based on their knowledge of the author, illustrator or genre. They read aloud a familiar piece of text using punctuation to add expression and make predictions about texts. At second level, most children can share thoughts about structure, characters and the main ideas of a text. The majority can answer a range of literal and inferential questions about a text and identify the difference between fact and opinion. Overall, children would benefit from more opportunities to experience reading across a wider range of contexts. This includes texts of interest to them. This will support children to explore writing across genres and by different authors.

### Writing

- Across all stages, approaches to writing should continue to be reviewed to evaluate impact on progression. Teachers should provide sufficient opportunities for children to write extended texts and apply writing across different curricular areas.
- At early level, most children use their knowledge of letters and sounds to spell familiar words and attempt to write sentences using full stops and capital letters accurately. At first level, the majority of children write news articles and diary entries using the relevant features of these

texts. They would benefit from continued practice in spelling frequently used words. At second level, most children write for different purposes, such as persuasive, personal, functional and imaginative writing. The majority assess their own and peers' writing accurately. Children at first and second level would benefit from developing personal writing targets to support improvements in their writing.

### **Numeracy and mathematics**

- Overall, attainment in numeracy and mathematics is satisfactory. A majority of children across the school are making expected progress. Teachers employ a range of strategies to develop children's skills, including daily starters involving mental calculations. These support children well to develop their confidence in performing calculations. In a minority of lessons, teachers use creative approaches to support children to develop their understanding of numbers. Children's knowledge and understanding in numeracy and mathematics could be improved by developing their skills more frequently in real-life contexts.

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

- At early level, most children know numbers to 10, with a majority being able to count to 20. Most children at early level identify when a group of objects is more or less than another group. A majority count on and backwards to show a basic understanding of addition and subtraction. A few children at early level count on in twos and fives. A majority of children at first level perform two-digit additions and subtractions, with a few performing calculations with numbers with up to four digits. Most children at first level should be supported to develop further their skills in performing calculations with money. A majority of children at first level round numbers with up to four digits. At second level most children perform divisions and multiplications with two-digit figures. A majority of children use an expenses sheet effectively to calculate a weekly budget. A majority convert weights in kilogrammes to grammes. Children at second level need to be supported further by staff to develop their understanding of percentages and fractions.

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

- At early level, a majority of children identify and sort a range of three-dimensional objects. Most use a range of words to describe the position of an object relative to another. At first level, a majority of children complete a picture with one line of symmetry. Most children at first level identify a point on a simple grid and name a range of three-dimensional objects. At second level, a majority of children use coordinates to describe a point on a grid. A minority complete shapes with more than one line of symmetry. A minority of children name a range of types of angles. Across the school, staff should support children to consolidate their knowledge in identifying a range of shapes and names of angles.

### **Information handling**

- At early level, a majority of children colour a simple pictograph to illustrate data collected from a class pet survey. At first level, a minority of children use tally tables to collate and analyse data. Most children at first level use a range of words to describe the likelihood of an event. Most children at second level complete a bar graph to illustrate and compare sets of data. A minority of children describe the probability of an event as a fraction, with a few describing this as a percentage. Across the school, children would benefit from increased opportunities to develop their skills in collating, illustrating and analysing data.

### **Attainment over time**

- Prior to the headteacher being in post, approaches to gather data were not sufficiently reliable or robust. As a result, the school does not have accurate attainment over time data prior to 2021. The headteacher has introduced new approaches to assessing, moderating and tracking progress. These new approaches are supporting teachers to become more confident and accurate when making professional judgements about children's progress and attainment. As a next step, teachers should develop further their use of data across the curriculum. They also need to analyse assessment data effectively to identify how different groups are attaining, including those most affected by poverty.

### **Overall quality of learner's achievements**

- Across the school, children have opportunities to develop leadership skills through recently established pupil leadership groups, such as junior sports leaders and peer mediators. These support children to develop their confidence when supporting younger children taking sports or resolving any disagreements. Children are proud of their leadership roles and are keen to make an effective contribution to improving their school for the benefit of all learners. Staff should now help children to identify and profile the skills they are developing through these leadership opportunities.
- Children's achievements in school are celebrated at assembly and through certificates linked to the school values and Curriculum for Excellence four capacities. Senior leaders and teachers do not yet track children's personal achievements out of school. Staff should ensure that children have opportunities to celebrate and share a wider range of successes. Staff and senior leaders should take steps to identify gaps in opportunity for groups and individuals.

### **Equity for all learners**

- The headteacher and staff have a clear understanding of the socio-economic circumstances of children and families. They are aware of the current cost of living crisis and seek to remove barriers to participation linked to the cost of the school day. For example, by minimising fund raising days and supporting recycling of school uniforms.
- The headteacher's rationale for PEF expenditure is based on analysis of data and wellbeing needs. The majority of PEF is focused on targeted interventions to support identified groups of children. Senior leaders are at an early stage of tracking the impact of interventions. There is emerging evidence of a positive impact on children's progress. As planned senior leaders should continue to track the success of funded interventions carefully. This will help senior leaders to evidence measurable progress for identified groups of children. This includes evidencing improvements for those children most affected by poverty.

## 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.