

Summarised inspection findings

Letham Primary School

Angus Council

28 November 2023

Key contextual information

Letham Primary School and Pre-school Class serve the large village of Letham and surrounding rural area. At the time of inspection, there were 148 children on the school roll and 20 children attending the pre-school class. There are seven primary classes. The school comprises of an original building with a recently-added extension. Almost all children attending the school live within Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation deciles six and seven. The headteacher and two part-time depute headteachers make up the senior leadership team.

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

- Letham Primary's vision is "to always give of our best and to be all we can be" and the values chosen are wisdom, integrity, justice and compassion. Children are not yet able to recognise and relate the school values to their lives and learning. Staff and children developed learner qualities which are displayed around the school. A few teachers refer to these in lessons well to support children's engagement, such as 'listening lions'. Staff and children are learning about children's rights and making links to the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child. As planned, senior leaders should continue to increase children's participation in planning improvements for learning and school life.
- Across all classes there are positive relationships between adults and children. Almost all staff use consistently caring and supportive language during interactions. As a result, children feel encouraged, valued and secure. They understand mistakes are part of learning through the use of helpful phrases, such as 'First Attempt in Learning'. Almost all children are engaged and attentive during tasks and activities. A minority of teachers use well-considered strategies and approaches to support children's participation.
- Children interact very well in pairs and groups when staff give them opportunities. However, too often children are passive in their learning experiences. The majority of lessons are teacher-led and children listen to instructions and examples for long periods. Most teachers should plan and provide more stimulating, interactive experiences and challenge. Staff should provide regular opportunities throughout the day for children to lead learning experiences and think for themselves.
- In almost all classes, teachers share and display the purpose of the lesson. They should now support children to make links across their learning and explain how they can use skills from lessons in real life. For example, numeracy concepts are practised regularly in an abstract, context-free manner and not linked to a meaningful purpose. In a few lessons, teachers outline how to be successful in learning and children contribute to this. This practice should be developed consistently across the school. Most teachers use questions to recap prior learning and check children's understanding of their task regularly. A minority of teachers use

open-ended questioning well to extend children's thinking and make effective use of plenaries to summarise key learning. Senior leaders and staff should discuss and share effective practice of questioning and plenaries. This would support all staff to better develop children's higher order thinking skills.

- Senior leaders ensure support staff have a sound awareness of children's learning and wellbeing needs. As a result, they provide well-timed support to identified children. They oversee interventions which are supporting children in targeted groups to practise learned skills and make progress in their literacy and numeracy. A few support staff intervene skilfully asking considered questions and offering helpful commentary. This protects children's self-esteem and helps them feel successful.
- Teachers often provide whole class lessons and tasks with little differentiation. At times, they allow children to choose questions or activities to complete. Across first and second levels, almost all children require a brisker pace of learning and less revision. Senior leaders should support teachers to plan and provide activities matched better to meet all children's individual needs. Senior leaders should provide further structure and monitor curricular progression more closely. This will help to ensure planned experiences and lessons build effectively on skills and knowledge taught in prior stages.
- The headteacher has developed comprehensive overviews of what teaching and learning should look like at Letham Primary School. However, these are not yet fully embedded across the school. A minority of teachers use research and professional learning well to enhance their skills. Their practice should be shared more widely. Senior leaders and staff should work together closely to agree and plan clear steps to achieve consistently high-quality teaching and learning across the school.
- Teachers make effective use of digital technologies to support children's learning. They use video clips, interactive whiteboards and internet resources successfully to support children's engagement. When children have opportunities to use laptops, tablets and programmable toys they do so with skill and confidence. Older children use collaborative digital tools well to share their thinking. Children, who are 'digital leaders', supported teachers recently to explore movie-making technologies. Staff should continue to build on their use of digital tools to enhance children's experiences, including supporting children to use technology for creative purposes. Senior leaders and staff should explore the use of digital technologies to involve parents, partners and the wider community in children's learning more regularly.
- At the early stages, teachers are developing their understanding and skills in using play as a vehicle for learning. They involve children regularly in choosing resources and themes for play. Teachers are at the early stages of using observations to support assessment. They would benefit from further professional learning, including working with practitioners in the pre-school class. They should be supported through regular and shared discussions using national practice guidance. This should help staff to understand what high-quality play looks like as children progress through and beyond the early level. Senior leaders and staff should use this knowledge to ensure planned play experiences are progressively challenging. Teachers should also support children to transfer skills they have learned to their play and across different contexts.
- Teachers provide verbal feedback during activities and brief written comments on children's work. Children peer- and self-assess classwork during a few lessons. Staff do not yet consistently support children to use feedback information to improve their work. Teachers make effective use of a range of strategies to check children's understanding. This includes 'iceberg diagrams' to show what is known and unknown, and standardised assessment at key

milestones. Overall, assessment is not yet a key part of planning and teachers do not record evaluations consistently. Senior leaders should support staff to use assessment information more effectively to inform teaching and learning. Teachers should support children to set targets for their learning and help them use feedback to understand their progress and next steps.

- Teachers plan weekly, termly and annually, using a variety of formats and approaches. These are most detailed for literacy, numeracy, and health and wellbeing. Teachers involve children increasingly in planning the content of learning, for example in social studies. They use a range of engaging ways to capture what children know and what they want to learn about. It is not yet clear from teachers' planning how the needs of all children, including those with barriers to learning, will be met. Senior leaders should support staff to plan coherently and progressively for all curricular areas, across stages.
- Teachers are developing their confidence and accuracy when making professional judgements about children's progress and achievement of a level across the curriculum. Senior leaders hold helpful termly 'care and welfare' and 'planning and assessment' meetings with teachers to discuss and record progress of classes and individuals. As planned, senior leaders should protect time for teachers to discuss expectations and agree and share standards. This should include early level staff working more closely with pre-school practitioners. This session, the headteacher has planned opportunities for teachers to moderate children's writing with colleagues in another school. She should build on this positive practice to include colleagues from the learning community and local authority, and other curricular areas.

2.1 Safeguarding and child protection

- 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.

3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

good

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

- Last session, school staff reported almost all children attained nationally expected Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels in literacy and numeracy at key milestones. However, teacher judgement is not yet robust and reliable across all organisers. Across the school, a few children at each stage are exceeding nationally expected levels. Most children who require additional support make good progress from prior levels of learning in literacy and numeracy.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, children are making good progress. Children are enthusiastic readers and enjoy borrowing books from well-stocked class and school libraries. Senior leaders and teachers should collate and evidence children's progress in listening and talking more robustly.

Listening and talking

- At early level, almost all children listen carefully to adults and instructions. Most are eager to volunteer answers when asked questions. They enjoy listening to stories and will benefit from further play with songs and rhymes. Most children, who have achieved first level, listen well to classmates and take turns when speaking. Almost all children describe experiences with their class using a show-and-tell approach. They require practice finding and using information when they are listening to, watching and talking about texts. At second level, almost all children contribute relevant ideas and opinions in discussions. They show respect for classmates' views and ask and answer a range of questions. Children require practice applying their skills to new, motivating and challenging experiences. This should include investigating complex ideas, language structures and specialist vocabulary.

Reading

- All children at early level are beginning to develop their reading skills. They recognise a growing range of initial letter sounds. Most children, who have achieved first level, read familiar texts with increasing fluency and are beginning to use more expression. They discuss favourite authors confidently and show awareness of genre. They will benefit further from building their understanding of features, such as punctuation and bold type. Most children, who are on track to achieve second level, attempt reading unfamiliar texts adding fluency and expression confidently. They understand differences between fact and opinion. Children require practice applying their skills in understanding, analysing and evaluating to challenging texts across the curriculum.

Writing

- At early level, all children practise writing a range of capital and lower-case letters. They record experiences and information using pictures and simple structured writing activities. A few children, across early and into first level, require further support with letter formation. Most

children, who have achieved first level, include features, such as onomatopoeia and similes, in their writing skilfully. They create imaginative stories, letters, recounts and play scripts successfully. A minority of children working towards first level require support applying spelling knowledge, for example in social studies. By the end of second level, most children understand and use well alliteration and personification. They produce quality imaginative writing of increasing length. Children use their skills effectively to create poetry, reports and autobiographical pieces. Across first and second levels, children require practice applying writing skills across the curriculum and for motivating, real-life purposes.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, children's progress in numeracy and mathematics is good. Across the school, children require practice linking, transferring and applying their numeracy and mathematical skills. Teachers should ensure they plan and provide a range of more meaningful, challenging contexts across the curriculum. This should include regular, real-life opportunities, such as finance education.

Number, money and measure

- At early level, all children use materials and visual prompts to support early counting skills well. They recognise an increasing range of numbers. Almost all children use one-to-one correspondence accurately to count objects up to five. All children, who have achieved first level, have a good understanding of place value. Most children select and explain processes and solutions clearly. They require further practice with multi-step problems. Almost all children, on track to achieve second level, demonstrate quick mental agility, completing calculations accurately. Most apply these skills well to time and money. Children will benefit from further practice understanding and applying links between fractions, decimals and percentages.

Shape, position and movement

- Almost all children at early level recognise a range of two-dimensional shapes. They are exploring the language of position and direction. Almost all children, who have achieved first level, identify right angles confidently. They will benefit from further practice using mathematical vocabulary, such as edge, vertex and base, to describe the properties of three-dimensional objects. Most children, on track to achieve second level, describe and classify a range of angles confidently. They understand the properties of a circle well. They are becoming more confident discussing supplementary and complementary angles.

Information handling

- At early level, all children use their knowledge of colour, shape and size well to match and sort items. They apply their skills successfully to real-life experiences, such as categorising litter. All children, who have achieved first level, gather and count responses using tallies. Most use the language of probability and chance confidently. Across second level, almost all children extract key information and answer questions from a range of charts, bar graphs and tables. Across first and second level, children require practice applying their skills within relevant and purposeful contexts. This should include use of digital technologies to gather and present data.

Attainment over time

- The headteacher uses the local authority tracking system to collate and monitor systematically children's progress in literacy and numeracy. Standardised assessment data shows children in P1, P4 and P7 attain well across reading, writing and numeracy. Staff do not yet track children's progress in other areas of the curriculum. Senior leaders and staff should develop clearer measures to evidence the progress of individuals receiving additional support and involve children and parents regularly in reviewing this.

- The headteacher recognises that teachers' overall professional judgements about children's progress are not yet accurate consistently. She is aware of the need to provide teachers with more support to develop further their understanding of standards. Senior leaders are at the early stages of analysing, tracking and monitoring the performance of specific groups of children to inform school improvement, such as those facing barriers to learning. Senior leaders are involving teachers more in data analysis which is supporting an increasing understanding of school strengths and gaps in learning. Senior leaders and teachers should consider how they could use data and analysis of information more effectively to meet all children's needs.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Most older children take on leadership roles, such as digital leaders and buddies. They understand the value these roles bring to school life. Across the school, an increasing number of children participate in school leadership groups, for example pupil council and the recently- formed children's rights group. Children develop skills for learning, life and work as a result of these opportunities. Children work well together with staff to gain national awards, for example in digital accreditation. They develop citizenship skills working together to raise money for charities.
- Staff value and celebrate children's successes out of school through a school display, 'community' sessions, Letham Primary talent show and in written parental communications. Cycle training and running sessions allow groups of older children to experience challenge and success. Excursions and learning community P7 activity days support children to gain confidence. Staff should explore ways to involve more children in achievement activities and sports across the school.
- Senior leaders should develop more consistent ways to plan and track children's participation in achievement experiences. This information will help them identify and plan support for all children who may be at risk of missing out. Teachers should support children further to identify and reflect on the skills and qualities they develop through activities in and out of school. This will support children to continue to build on their achievements and progress.

Equity for all learners

- Senior leaders and staff understand the socio-economic context of the school community and know children and families well. They use this information when planning the use of Pupil Equity Funding and considering any events with cost. Currently, the headteacher uses funding to provide additional staffing to support targetted groups of children. Last session, children, whose families were in receipt of a clothing grant, achieved nationally expected CfE levels at key milestones. Working together, the headteacher and staff should develop clearer measures to evidence the impact planned interventions have on accelerating individual children's progress and achievement. This should support staff to identify which interventions and strategies to raise attainment and reduce disadvantage are most effective. Senior leaders recognise an important next step is to consider how to ensure all children facing potential barriers to their learning receive equity of experience and opportunity.

Other relevant evidence

- The headteacher informs parents and children about the school's plans for Pupil Equity Funding. She has taken account of ideas from parents when deciding on the focus of spending.
- Senior leaders and teachers should ensure that all children receive two hours of high-quality, progressive physical education each week. They should continue to build on positive links with Active Schools partners and the 'secondary school sports leaders' initiative.
- In line with Curriculum for Excellence guidance, staff should ensure that all children are receiving a broad general education that includes regular quality experiences across all eight curricular areas. This should ensure children build skills progressively as they move through the school.

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.