

Summarised inspection findings

Lybster Primary School

The Highland Council

23 April 2024

Key contextual information

Lybster Primary School is a small, rural school situated in the village of Lybster in the Highlands. Children attend the school from Lybster, Latheron, Latheronwheel and the surrounding area. At the time of the inspection, the school roll of 65 children was being taught across three multi-stage classes. 15 children attend the early learning and childcare setting. Almost all children live in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) deciles three and four. A minority of children have additional support needs or require more help to make progress in their learning. School attendance is in line with the national average and there were no cases of exclusion.

The school has experienced considerable changes to the leadership team, teaching staff and nursery team over the last three years. The headteacher has been in post since October 2020. She has overall leadership responsibility for Lybster Primary School and Dunbeath Primary School. Prior to becoming headteacher of both schools, she was a class teacher in Lybster Primary School. The headteacher is supported by an acting principal teacher, who took up post in August 2023. The principal teacher teaches in class four days each week.

1.3 Leadership of change

weak

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 and all staff place a very strong emphasis on wellbeing and positive relationships at Lybster Primary School. The school roll is small which helps to create a strong sense of community. The headteacher and all staff know children and their personal circumstances well. Staff are knowledgeable about the rural context of the school and the opportunities and challenges this presents for families and children's learning and achievement. Staff have created a positive environment based on respectful relationships and collaboration that supports staff to meet the wellbeing needs of all children. Staff now need to focus on improving learning and teaching to raise attainment in literacy and numeracy. The headteacher, staff and children should work together to develop an agreed learning, teaching and assessment standard.
- The headteacher, staff and children have reviewed the school's vision, values and aims recently. The refreshed vision 'Ready, Respectful and Safe' and school values are displayed across the school and in each classroom. Children are not yet able to talk confidently about the vision and values and why they are important in school life. All staff should make regular reference to the vision and values in their daily learning and teaching.
- Overall, there are important weaknesses in the approaches to leadership of change. In recent years there have been significant changes to the leadership team. This has had a negative impact on the school's ability to sustain change over time. The headteacher acknowledges that the pace of change should be developed and accelerated to improve children's outcomes. The headteacher needs to take a more rigorous and consistent approach to evaluating the work of

the school. This will help build a more accurate picture of strengths and areas for improvement. The headteacher should gather the views of children, parents and staff to support self-evaluation activity and plan for change. The improvement plan should include more specific measures of success to help the headteacher and staff to evaluate and evidence the impact of development work. The headteacher and staff should ensure that all improvements lead to positive outcomes and experiences for children.

- The headteacher checks the quality of the school's work by observing teachers' practice twice a year and meeting with them termly to review children's progress. The headteacher identifies correctly she needs to establish a more robust approach to quality assurance. She must review and evaluate all aspects of the school's work in a more robust and cohesive way. Approaches should include regular class observations, monitoring children's work and discussions with children about their learning and progress. The headteacher should use evidence gathered through quality assurance activities to support greater consistency in learning and teaching approaches used across the school.
- The headteacher supports all teachers to engage with annual professional reviews. Teachers link their personal development plans to the General Teaching Council for Scotland standards, aspects of the school improvement plan and areas of personal interest. Staff have regular opportunities to engage in professional learning led by the local authority and partners. The headteacher needs to ensure that professional learning and collegiate time are planned to support the most significant areas for improvement. The headteacher should take steps to align collegiate working more closely with the needs of the school. It is important that the headteacher and all staff monitor carefully the impact of career-long professional learning and all development work on improving outcomes for children.
- The majority of staff have leadership roles, including leading on interventions, curriculum areas and supporting pupil leadership groups. The headteacher needs to develop further a collective responsibility linked to the process of change. It would be beneficial to revisit the remits of all staff. This should help identify opportunities for leadership roles across the whole school community linked to school improvement priorities. This should help to improve the pace and effectiveness of change.
- Children have a few opportunities to take on leadership roles and activities across the school including student council, reading school and children's rights committees. At P7, children can be a house captain and buddy for younger children. For the majority of children, leadership activities are not yet a regular feature of their life at school. Children are eager and would benefit from, more opportunities to enhance and improve the work of the school. In doing so, children can develop their leadership skills and increase their sense of value to the school community. This will ensure that all children have increased opportunities to apply their learning and skills in real-life contexts. A minority of children are unsure if staff consult them about school improvement. Staff should explain clearly to children when they ask for and act on their views.
- The school receives Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) which the headteacher uses to improve attainment in literacy and numeracy. An additional teacher provides targeted literacy support for identified children. The headteacher should plan, monitor and evaluate carefully the impact of this support on accelerating progress and closing the poverty related attainment gap. She should continue to consult the school community about how to allocate PEF.

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 are polite, well-mannered, and welcoming. They experience positive relationships with staff who know them well. Most learning environments are attractive and well-organised. Staff use displays well to support children's learning and to recognise achievements. In most lessons children are attentive and take part willingly in tasks and activities. They can work independently, in pairs or in small groups. This positive attitude to learning is more evident when activities are stimulating and well-matched to the needs and interests of individuals. In most lessons, teachers direct learning towards the whole class. In the majority of lessons, planned activities do not meet the needs of all children in the mixed-stage classes. Teachers need to provide a wider range of learning activities matched correctly to all children's needs. This includes children who require additional support or challenge to help them make appropriate progress.
- In most lessons, teachers provide clear instructions, share the purpose of learning and help children understand what they need to do to be successful. In a few lessons, teachers support children to identify steps to success. Teachers should continue to work together to develop a shared understanding of high-quality learning and teaching across the school. This should include a focus on using skilled questioning to deepen and enhance children's learning and develop their higher-order thinking skills.
- Staff working with the youngest children are at the early stages of introducing a play-based approach to support children's learning. Young children are enthusiastic when given opportunities to learn through play. The headteacher and staff should develop further their understanding of approaches to play by engaging in professional learning and taking account of national practice guidance. This should support staff to ensure the range of children's learning experiences are age-appropriate and meet their learning needs.
- In most lessons, teachers use digital technology effectively to support learning and teaching. Teachers use interactive whiteboards effectively to enrich children's learning experiences. Children enjoy opportunities to use devices to play educational games, carry out research and write stories. In a few lessons, children are developing their use of devices to access, share and record their learning.
- Most teachers give children written and oral feedback. The quality of this feedback does not always support children to understand the progress they are making or what their next steps in learning are. Teachers need to develop consistent approaches to feedback, including self- and peer-assessment. Teachers should give children clear feedback that supports next steps and improvement.

- Teachers use a range of assessment approaches, including standardised assessments and published materials, to measure children's progress within literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing (HWB). These approaches are outlined in an assessment calendar. Teachers need to use better information gathered through a range of assessments to plan learning that is set at the right level of difficulty for all children.
- Teachers engaged recently in helpful moderation activity with colleagues from nearby schools. This is helping to support the development of teachers' professional judgements. The headteacher should continue to ensure these activities happen regularly. Teachers would benefit from more planned time working alongside colleagues in other schools. This gives them opportunities to share practice in planning for assessment and linking children's progress to national Benchmarks more explicitly. This will help increase teachers' accuracy and confidence when making professional judgements about children's achievement of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels.
- Teachers plan learning over different timescales, including long-term and short-term. They use a range of learning pathways, including those developed by the local authority, to inform this planning. Children are involved in identifying areas of interest. They enjoy being consulted about what they would like to learn. Teachers need to plan more clearly for different groups within the class. This should ensure children make appropriate progress in their learning from their individual starting points.
- The headteacher and class teachers track children's progress across literacy and numeracy. They are at the early stages of tracking children's wellbeing. They meet three times a year to discuss children's progress. This allows them to identify children working above or below expected levels of achievement. Their discussions inform the planning of support for children who would benefit from extra help. Teachers need to use current data more effectively to adapt activities and tasks to meet the needs of all children. This should ensure increased pace and challenge with learning for all children. Staff should check more regularly the impact of interventions they put in place and identify the difference they make for children facing additional challenges. This will inform planning and support equity of learning further for all children.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- All teachers refer to learning pathways provided by Highland Council to plan learning across most curricular areas. The pathways take account of CfE experiences and outcomes and the national Benchmarks. Teachers use three-year rolling programmes to plan coverage of most curriculum areas. As identified, staff should work collaboratively to ensure these plans are comprehensive and lead to consistent, progressive planning across all curricular areas. This will support teachers to plan learning that builds on what children already know and can do. As part of this development, all stakeholders should be consulted to ensure the curriculum rationale reflects the context of the school.
- The school has an outdoor classroom and children have the opportunity to learn outside in a few lessons. Staff should now develop a progressive outdoor learning programme to maximise the potential of the school grounds and the local area to enhance children's experiences.
- Across the school children learn French. There are opportunities for older children to develop their awareness of other languages including Gaelic, Spanish and British Sign Language.
- Teachers provide opportunities for children to develop their digital skills using a range of different devices. Older children have access to their own device. There is a progressive programme for learning in digital technologies. Staff need to ensure this is implemented successfully to ensure a more consistent approach to the use of digital technologies across the school.
- The school has a well-stocked, well-organised and inviting library which provides a wide range of texts. Children enjoy visiting the library. They also have access to a visiting mobile library once a month. Children would like to visit the school library more frequently and be able to take books selected from the library home to read.
- Children in all classes receive regular religious education following the local authority progression pathways. Religious observance is in line with national guidance.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- Most parents and carers feel that staff know their child as an individual and that their child is looked after well at school. Parents and carers value regular communication from the school. Staff communicate with parents using an online app, emails and through the school website. A few parents would like the headteacher's monthly newsletters to be reinstated. They like to receive advance notice of school events.
- Parents and carers are interested in their child's learning and progress. They want the best for their child. They would like to receive more regular information about what their child is learning and the progress they are making. Staff should explore how the online app could support this.
- The Parent Council impacts positively on the wider life of the school. This includes organising events and helping to raise funds to support the work of the school. All children benefit from experiences, such as trips and events, being funded so that cost is not a barrier.
- The Parent Council would welcome increased opportunities to share their views on school improvement. The Parent Council is aware of the school's plan for PEF. They would welcome further opportunities to influence this area of the school's work.

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

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

- The headteacher and all staff place high importance on supporting and improving the wellbeing of children and their families. They work hard to create a nurturing, inclusive environment. Respectful and positive relationships are evident across the school. Most children feel safe in school, listened to and cared for. They can identify a trusted adult in school and are confident they can go to them if they are worried or upset.
- Across the school, most children play together well in the playground. Older children support and organise games for the younger children. This is helping children across the school to build positive, respectful relationships with each other. A minority of parents, children and staff say that bullying occurs in the school and is not always dealt with well or communicated effectively to them. The headteacher and staff need to work with children and families to make them more aware of the school's anti-bullying policy. They need to work with children and families to develop an effective approach to anti-bullying. This should help develop a shared understanding and an increased awareness of anti-bullying education.
- Children experience a health and wellbeing curriculum which includes focus days such as Safer Internet Day, road safety and healthy eating. Children are developing good skills and understanding in mental health, positive relationships, the importance of physical exercise and healthy eating, as a result. The school provides children with regular opportunities to participate in physical activities, such as the Daily Mile. The headteacher should review timetables to ensure all children receive two hours of high-quality physical education each week. Staff have begun to track children's progress in aspects of health and wellbeing. Staff are using this information well to identify areas where children may need support. Children are at the early stages of developing an understanding of the national wellbeing indicators. All staff should continue to embed the language of the wellbeing indicators in daily school life. This should support children to discuss and reflect better on their own wellbeing.
- There is an increasing focus on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child across the school. Children and staff have worked together to develop class charters. The majority of children are aware of their rights. Children and staff have gained recently the first stage of a three-level national recognition award for their work on children's rights. Children in the 'Rights Rockstars Committee' raise awareness of children's rights throughout the school, particularly during whole school assemblies. All staff should continue to highlight children's rights across the curriculum to ensure all children understand their relevance and how they impact upon their wellbeing. The headteacher recognises the need to review the school's positive behaviour policy. This will ensure it reflects the revised school values and the work being undertaken on children's rights.

- All staff understand fully and meet their statutory responsibilities in relation to wellbeing, equality and inclusion. Staff are aware of their responsibilities in relation to safeguarding and keeping children safe. Staff identify children in their classes who have additional support needs effectively. Local authority staged intervention plans, child's plans and risk assessments support staff to recognise and plan to meet individual children's needs. Parents and children are involved fully in planning processes. The headteacher should work with staff to ensure targets in child's plans are short-term, measurable, achievable, realistic and time bound. This will help staff to track more effectively the progress made by individual children and support the strategic planning of support for learning across the school.
- The headteacher monitors attendance regularly. She follows local authority attendance procedures. Staff work with partners to provide timely support for children and families when attendance levels begin to fall. As a result, attendance at Lybster Primary School has been in line with the national average for the last three years.
- Children experience a range of learning activities, including assemblies and class work, which provide opportunities for them to explore diversity and multi-faith issues. This is helping them to develop their understanding and appreciation of different religious and cultural events. Staff should continue to develop children's knowledge about equalities and inclusion through well-planned and progressive learning opportunities. This will support children to feel able to recognise and challenge discrimination and intolerance should they arise.
- Staff work with colleagues to support children well as they come to school from early years settings or move on to secondary school. Children requiring additional support benefit from enhanced transition arrangements during periods of transition. Children and parents would welcome more transition activities across the year. Staff should continue to work with colleagues within the nursery and associated high school to enhance children's transition experiences. This should support children to feel more confident as they move onto the next stage of their learning.

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

- The number of children at each stage varies and is relatively small. Overall statements have been used about attainment and progress to ensure individuals are not identified.
- Overall, the majority of children are attaining expected levels of attainment in literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics. Attainment is strongest in numeracy and listening and talking. The majority of children are making satisfactory progress from their prior levels of attainment. Children requiring additional support in their learning are making satisfactory progress towards individual targets. A minority of children are capable of achieving more across their learning.
- Assessment data provided by the school is based on teachers' professional judgements of children's progress and attainment. Currently, there is a lack of consistency in how they use assessments to support their professional judgements. As a result, data provided is not yet consistently reliable or accurate. Senior leaders should continue to build teachers' confidence in using a range of assessments, data, and moderation activities to make increasingly robust professional judgements. This will improve the reliability of data and contribute more effectively to plans to raise attainment.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, children are making satisfactory progress in literacy and English. A minority of children are capable of making better progress.

Listening and talking

- Across the school, most children listen well to their teachers and follow instructions. A few children become disengaged when listening in whole class activities. Younger children take turns when listening and talking in groups. A few children need to develop skills in turn-taking further. Older children talk about their learning tasks and share their views well. They have opportunities to present information to others in class. A few children present information confidently to others during assembly. Older children identify techniques that help make presenting information successful. Across the school, children would benefit from presenting information to others more often, to build their confidence.

Reading

- Across the school, all children read for pleasure. They access a range of quality books within class libraries or when using digital technology. Younger children recognise most initial sounds correctly. They now need to develop their confidence in using known sounds to read familiar words. A minority of children are capable of learning new sounds and words more quickly. As children progress through the school, they use a range of word recognition strategies

independently to read words. They identify the main ideas of a text effectively and are developing confidence in making appropriate suggestions about the purpose of a text. Children are not yet confident recognising differences between fiction and non-fiction books. Older children identify the differences between fact and opinion confidently. They recognise techniques that the author uses to engage the reader, for example word choice. Older children need more practice reading aloud to develop their confidence using appropriate pace and tone.

Writing

- Younger children are developing confidence in forming lower case letters correctly. They form letters legibly when copying from a text. They now need to develop their confidence in writing independently through play, imaginative and real-life contexts. Children in the middle stages write independently, punctuating sentences accurately using a capital letter and full stop. A few children use exclamation marks and question marks appropriately in their written work. The majority of children spell most common words correctly and have spelling strategies to support them when spelling unfamiliar words. Older children link sentences using a range of conjunctions. They do not yet consistently use paragraphs to separate thoughts and ideas.
- Across the school, children would benefit from more frequent opportunities to write independently across the curriculum. This would help them to develop better writing skills and techniques. All children need to improve the presentation of written work.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, children are making satisfactory progress in numeracy and mathematics. A minority of children are capable of making better progress.

Number, money and measure

- Younger children order numbers to 20 and identify the number before and after correctly. They are developing their confidence in adding and subtracting numbers within 10. Children across the middle stages identify accurately the place value of digits within numbers to a 1000. They need to develop their ability to solve two-step problems. Older children explain the link between a digit, its place and its value for whole numbers to 100,000 confidently. They round numbers to the nearest 1000, 10,000 and 100,000. They are less confident calculating area and perimeter of shapes.

Shape, position and movement

- Younger children name and discuss successfully the properties of two-dimensional (2D) shapes. They are less confident naming and discussing the properties of three-dimensional (3D) objects. They need to develop their understanding of symmetry. Older children describe angles accurately using appropriate language, such as acute, obtuse and reflex. They are less confident discussing the relationship between 3D objects and their nets.

Information handling

- Younger children match and sort items well by colour, size, and shape. Older children extract key information and answer questions correctly from a range of graphs and tables. All children need to practise applying data and analysis skills regularly in a wide range of real-life, rich contexts. Children would benefit from using digital technology to record, collect and display data.

Attainment over time

- The headteacher has developed approaches to track and monitor children's progress across literacy and numeracy. This is not yet leading to improved outcomes for learners at all stages. Staff should ensure greater rigour in analysing data for groups and cohorts, such as those who

experience barriers to learning, to identify trends in attainment over time. Staff should have a clearer focus on evidencing how they are accelerating children's progress.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Staff value and celebrate children's achievements, both in and out with school, at whole school assemblies and on achievement wall displays. Children receive house points and values certificates which help to build their confidence and self-esteem. A minority of children have opportunities to achieve widely by contributing to the life of the school and the local community. This includes the student council, reading group and as P7 house captains. These children are proud of the contribution they make to the life of the school. Staff work effectively with partners to provide a range of free lunchtime and out of school activities for children across the school. These include a lunchtime chess club, before school dance 'wake-up' and multi-sports sessions after school. Children participate in events with other children from nearby schools, such as highland games and tri-sports. During these events, children engage enthusiastically and demonstrate skills of good sportsmanship.
- Staff should now develop systems to track children's achievement and capture the skills they are developing. This should help to ensure that no child is at risk of missing out and that children's skills are developed progressively.

Equity for all learners

- The headteacher and staff understand the social, economic and cultural factors that impact on the lives of children and their families well. They have taken positive steps to minimise the cost of the school day and signpost families to relevant community resources for support. The Parent Council supports the school well by providing financial support for a range of experiences, including trips at no cost. This ensures no child misses out.
- The headteacher uses PEF to provide targeted support for identified groups and individuals. Focused intervention in literacy is supporting identified children to develop confidence, increase engagement and to make progress in reading. Senior leaders should strengthen approaches to monitor and track the impact of interventions funded by PEF on children's attainment. This will help support them in determining whether PEF funded interventions are accelerating progress and improving outcomes for identified children.

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.