

# Summarised inspection findings

**Kingswells Primary School and Nursery Class**

Aberdeen City Council

30 May 2023

## Key contextual information

Kingswells Primary School is situated to the west of Aberdeen City in the village of Kingswells. In September 2021, 87% of children lived in deciles nine and ten of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD). The school roll was 377 children in March 2023. They are organised over 16 classes. The headteacher has been in post for over eight years. She undertakes this role four days per week. She is supported by three depute headteachers, who each work four days per week. One of the depute headteachers is the substantive headteacher one day per week.

### 1.3 Leadership of change

very 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 joint headteacher team comprises two experienced and highly capable senior leaders. They have been in post for over eight years in these roles. In this time, they have developed a strong, clear understanding of the needs of the children and families within the school community. They have worked very well with the senior leadership team to establish and sustain a positive vision for the school. Together, along with all staff, they ensure a caring, nurturing and supportive environment for all children. Almost all children, parents and staff are positive about the changes made in recent years. Almost all parents feel the school is well led.
- The vision, values and aims of the school are well-embedded and underpin the work of the school community. Children, parents and staff were involved in creating them and they are built on a sound understanding of children's rights. The values of 'Responsible Robin', 'Resilient Rabbit', 'Respectful Reindeer', 'Hardworking Hedgehog', 'Friendship Frog' and 'Kind Koala' are very well understood and modelled in the behaviours of almost all in the school. The value of 'Kind Koala' was recently added following direct input from children. They identified as part of their friendship project a need to focus on kindness towards each other. Children regularly reflect on the school values and how they demonstrate them in their day-to-day interactions. Most children talk very confidently about the values of the school and how these relate to their rights. Senior leaders have identified the need to refine the values and aims to ensure they fully reflect the changes in the school community and the school's curriculum in recent years.
- The senior leadership team are highly reflective. They have a very strong understanding of self-evaluation and how to lead change. Both headteachers are very aware of the need to manage the pace of change and are sensitive to the needs of children and staff. They have a clear focus on building capacity in all staff through sound approaches to coaching and mentoring. All teachers feel empowered to lead change. This is supported by effective approaches to professional review and development. Staff engage in professional learning aligned to school priorities but also have the autonomy to develop areas of practice linked to their own interests. They feel trusted by senior leaders to lead change and improvements across the school. This is a major strength of the school's work.

- Senior leaders have implemented very well-developed, data-informed approaches to self-evaluation and improvement planning. There are five well-considered areas for improvement in the school improvement plan. These include continuing to develop the play-based environment, developing a more resilient community and a focus on pedagogy to provide consistency in high-quality learning and teaching. Planning for the use of Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) is in line with national expectations. Senior leaders are very effective in setting the strategic direction of the school. They have a clear understanding of the risks associated with change and have worked very well with both staff and parents to share their aspirational vision for children. Almost all members of the school community share this vision and understand the benefits it can bring to children at Kingswells Primary School. Children and parents take part in self-evaluation activities and contribute to the school improvement planning process. Children attend Parent Council (PC) meetings regularly to talk about the work of the school and how it is impacting on them.
- Across the school, staff work very well as a team. Teachers and pupil support assistants lead on areas of improvement readily. They have successfully improved approaches to learning and teaching, embedded approaches to play-based learning at P1 to P3 and are developing play-based learning from P4 to P7. Importantly, they are very aware of the need to review planned changes to ensure they are improving experiences and outcomes for all children.
- Staff are outward looking. They are keen to enhance and improve their practice by learning from others. They share the impact of their changes beyond the school. A few staff have lead roles within the local authority to improve aspects of practice across schools. For example, one of the headteachers supports senior and middle leadership development and teachers share their successful development of play with other schools.
- There are highly-effective systems in place for children to lead change. There is a clear process for children to gather the views of children in P2 to P7 about the work of the school. This has led to positive change, for example an increase in play in the upper stages and the introduction of the 'Kind Koala'. Children, particularly in P6 and P7, lead change in different ways. Post holders such as house captains, Parent Council pupil representatives and play leaders identify and reflect on what is working well in the school and where they can contribute to improvements. Positively, children in the pupil voice group have worked to produce a child-friendly version of the school improvement plan. This is helping children to plan and lead their own improvement priorities.
- Staff acknowledge that the COVID-19 pandemic has had an impact on partnership working. They have worked very well to re-establish partnership working and seek out new partners to enhance learners' experiences. Senior leaders should continue to develop the involvement of partners in improvement planning and evaluating their joint work.

## 2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

very good

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

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

- All staff create a very positive and nurturing learning environment, which supports children across all areas of the school. The school community's warm and encouraging ethos is based firmly on the school values, which are well understood by children. Staff interact respectfully and supportively with children and model positive relationships. As a result, almost all children have developed interpersonal skills including friendliness and kindness. They support each other's learning very well.
- Almost all children are well behaved and engage very well with their learning. They receive clear feedback from their teachers and from each other that helps them to feel motivated to make improvements in their learning. Children have many opportunities to take responsibility for improving their own learning and they are very proud of what they achieve. They enjoy leading their own learning and the opportunities that they have to lead the learning of children at other stages of the school.
- Staff make very good use of approaches to play-based learning, outdoor learning, cross-stage learning and digital technology. Children have many opportunities to make choices in their learning and they find this enjoyable. Almost all children are happy with the quality of teaching in the school. This is reflected in the calm and purposeful way they engage with learning in their classrooms and outdoors. Children's learning is shared with parents and carers using 'spotlight on learning videos' and on an online platform. Children enjoy being able to talk about their school work at home. Staff should now continue with plans to review the use of the online platform to develop consistency when sharing children's learning and progress with home.
- Overall, the quality of teaching is very good across the school. In almost all lessons the pace of learning is appropriately brisk. Teachers work very well together to develop approaches to classroom activities and are well supported by the school's learning, teaching and assessment framework. Teachers feel empowered to support each other as they develop new approaches, for example in helping children to develop group-working skills. This collaborative work helps senior leaders to support the development of consistency in the quality of children's experiences across the school.
- In all lessons, teachers make the purpose of learning clear, linking the work to children's prior learning. They also discuss with children how they can achieve success, building in regular opportunities for children to contribute to the creation of criteria for success. All teachers plan learning activities well to make sure that children develop the skills they need to work independently, in pairs and in groups. Teachers have been improving the use of questioning to help children develop their thinking skills. There are examples of very strong practice in a minority of classes that are worth sharing across the school. All teachers use digital technology very well to support learning, including the use of assistive technology to help those who require additional support. Across the school all children have access to digital devices. These

are used very well for a range of purposes. Teachers are creative in the use of resources and this includes, for example, taking learning outdoors to the woods beside the school.

- Teachers use group work purposefully and effectively to support learning. They skilfully form groups of children for particular tasks and to support those who require additional support. These groups are changed depending on the demands of the task. They are very helpful in making sure that children achieve success in their learning while also building their communication skills in working together with different people.
- Children benefit from high-quality learning experiences in P1 which reflect well the principles of national guidance, *Realising the Ambition: Being Me (2020)*. Staff have created a stimulating and rich learning environment both indoors and outside to enable children to learn very effectively through play. As well as weekly opportunities for play in the woods, the children in P1 participate in daily opportunities for free flow play in the school grounds. Children's engagement in learning is very high. Staff interact with children skilfully, extending and deepening their learning across the curriculum. They have a good understanding of when to observe or intervene in child-led learning. Commendably, this very good practice has been embedded in P2 and P3 and is now being extended beyond this.
- In P2 and P3, teachers have a strong shared understanding of learning through play and their role in observing and enhancing the learning that takes place while children are playing. They make very good use of a wide range of carefully selected resources which help children develop their creativity. Children in the older classes also have weekly opportunities to learn through play, and they enjoy the opportunity to lead their own learning in this way.
- All teachers plan ongoing assessment of children's learning using the benchmarks and their own frameworks, for example to capture 'in-the-moment' learning during free play. Teachers use a variety of assessment approaches including a balance of formative and summative assessments that allow learners to demonstrate their learning. Teachers use standardised assessments which help to confirm their professional judgements about learners' progress. Children have opportunities for self- and peer-assessment which helps them to understand the standards expected of them. School staff should continue, as planned, to explore ways in which children can be more involved in decisions about how their learning can be assessed.
- Teachers work together very well as they plan learning, teaching and assessment and this is helping them to build confidence as they make judgements about children's attainment. Teachers use long-term planning, linked clearly to the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) experiences and outcomes, across all areas of the curriculum. These long-term planners are supplemented by more in-depth, short-term planning of learning and teaching. Teachers use assessment information very well to adjust plans for future learning and this helps to make sure that all children's needs are being met. As planned, teachers should continue to build their expertise in assessment by working together with colleagues within and outwith Kingswells Primary School.
- All teachers track children's attainment and discuss their progress in learning with senior leaders regularly. This supports teachers to put in place appropriate interventions if children are at risk of under-attaining. Teachers use their tracking information to make sure that future learning experiences help children get back on track or maintain current levels of progress. Parents and carers regularly receive information about children's progress. Most parents and carers feel that they understand how their children's progress is monitored. They feel the information passed on by the school about children's progress is helpful.

## 2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- All teachers plan learning for children using progression pathways based on the CfE experiences and outcomes across all curricular areas. This ensures that all children experience a curriculum that reflects the CfE curricular design principles and fulfils the entitlements of all children. Staff plan learning for individual lessons and for longer periods of time, clearly outlining learning experiences and approaches to assessment. This includes flexibility to make sure that planned learning will meet the needs of children requiring additional support.
- Staff at all levels in the school have very successfully developed new approaches to delivering the curriculum, including play-based learning, especially in P1 to P3, outdoor learning and cross-stage learning.
- School staff plan effective learning which uses links across different subjects. This allows children to apply their skills and knowledge, ensuring the depth of their learning. Children enjoy these opportunities to connect separate aspects of their learning.
- Digital approaches to learning and teaching are well developed in the school, and this helps children achieve success in their learning. Children use the internet regularly to undertake research and to develop presentation skills. Children use matrix barcodes well to access resources to support their work and demonstrate their learning.
- All children benefit from two hours of physical education (PE) each week, both indoors and outdoors. School staff have worked together well in taking a strategic approach to developing high-quality PE.
- Teachers share helpful information about children's progress, ensuring children move from stage to stage in their learning successfully. This includes moving from nursery to school, between classes in the primary and from primary to secondary. Where children require additional support, transition activities are adapted to meet their needs.

## 2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- Senior leaders and staff work in partnership with parents very well. Parents are very supportive of the work of the school and almost all feel comfortable approaching staff and senior leaders with concerns, questions or ideas. Almost all parents feel that their child is making good progress. Senior leaders promote the importance of parental engagement in supporting children's learning. Senior leaders, working closely with the Parent Council, have developed 'Parents as Education Partners' (PEP) videos. There are PEP videos on a range of themes which focus on how parents can support their child's learning at home. Children's views are captured in each video, with children sharing what learning looks like for them at Kingswells Primary School. Staff share informative frameworks with parents which outline standards and expectations at each stage. Examples include key features of children's writing or tasks children might be expected to carry out independently. Parents are very positive about these helpful resources.
- Staff organise helpful opportunities for parents to learn alongside their child and to attend workshops, events and parents' evenings. Staff and children use a digital platform regularly to share learning with parents. Most parents feel they receive helpful, timely information and feedback about how their child is progressing.
- Staff value parents' support. Senior leaders seek parents' views regularly and act upon their feedback, using this to inform developments and improvement priorities. Parents welcome the regular communication they receive about the work of the school from senior leaders and staff. Staff use a range of contact formats effectively, including social media platforms, email and the school website. Parents are encouraged to engage in whole-school initiatives as well as supporting their child's learning. This results in parents having a better understanding of the purpose of new approaches or developments and how they might discuss these with their child.

## 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

very 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

- Senior leaders and all staff place wellbeing, relationships and values at the heart of the work of the school. As a result, children experience an inclusive, nurturing and compassionate learning environment where they feel happy, safe and motivated to learn. Senior leaders and staff know and value each child as an individual. Every member of the Kingswells staff team is committed to helping all children achieve the best outcomes possible. There is a strong sense of community across the school.
- Senior leaders recognise the increased need to support wellbeing following the COVID-19 pandemic. Across the school, teachers use a range of approaches to help children reflect on their wellbeing, including daily check-ins, wellbeing diaries and surveys. Teachers skilfully adapt the health and wellbeing curriculum to meet the needs of all children in their class, in response to the wellbeing data they gather. A whole-school programme supports all children effectively to talk about their emotional wellbeing. Staff use this resource very well to help children develop strategies for when they feel anxious, angry or sad. Almost all children feel that they are well cared for in school and that staff are helping them to improve their wellbeing.
- The school values are embedded across all aspects of daily practice. Children talk confidently about how the values are demonstrated in their learning and the life of the school. They are enthusiastic about the recent addition of 'Kind Koala' to their school values. They have planned a whole-school friendship project to support all children to feel welcome and included. As part of the project, friendship monitors in the playground ensure everyone has someone to play with. Children are empowered and active participants in their learning and the wider life of the school. They know their views are important, that they are listened to and that what they say will be acted upon. They have a strong voice in decision making at both class and whole-school level.
- All children have a very good understanding of the wellbeing indicators. They help to create videos to support parents, families and the community to understand the impact of wellbeing on learning. Older children articulately describe connections between the school values, the wellbeing indicators and children's rights. Almost all children are knowledgeable about how to take care of their own and others' wellbeing. They have a clear understanding of the links between wellbeing, learning and achieving success.
- Senior leaders and staff have high expectations for themselves and children. They encourage individuals to have aspirational goals. Staff promote resilience, one of their values, across the school well. They encourage children to challenge themselves and see mistakes as a necessary part of learning. This positive mindset is improving children's confidence and self-esteem as learners. They are more likely to take measured risks in their

learning and play. Outdoor learning is embedded across the school with regular opportunities to get outside in all weathers. There are strong approaches to play in P1-3, with loose parts play and free-play sessions being rolled out across older classes. All children benefit from opportunities to be active and creative and to develop their physical and social skills. Learner engagement is very high across the school. All children experience rich opportunities to develop a range of skills and achieve success through the broad and balanced curriculum. Staff help children to develop an understanding of their place in the local community and as global citizens. They make clear links to children's rights, the school values and the wellbeing indicators.

- Senior leaders and staff fulfil their statutory duties for wellbeing, equality, and inclusion very well, including meeting additional support needs of children. All staff undertake appropriate professional learning to keep up to date with information relevant to children with additional support needs or those with medical requirements. Support staff are deployed well to ensure a high level of provision to meet the range of children's needs across the school. All staff have a clear understanding of their responsibilities in relation to safeguarding and keeping children safe. They complete training in line with national expectations.
- All staff know children and families very well. Senior leaders are proactive in their work with partners to reduce barriers to learning for all children. Together, they improve outcomes for individual children and families. Senior leaders use staged intervention approaches very effectively to assess and support children. This includes bespoke, flexible approaches which allow staff to be highly responsive to children's changing needs. For example, attending the 'Life Skills' group helps children develop a range of important skills through baking, shopping, and excursions within the community. Staff help children with self-regulation strategies, improving social skills and developing friendships in a safe and nurturing environment. Senior leaders and staff develop appropriate plans for children who require additional support. They review and discuss children's progress regularly with parents and partners as appropriate. Staff use child-friendly Individual Education Plans to support discussion with children. They should continue to build on this approach to gather children's views on their progress. All children make appropriate or accelerated progress as a result of interventions and supports in place.
- Staff and children value and celebrate diversity in their school community. There are regular opportunities to learn about different cultures and religions. Staff and children learn about and promote equality and diversity and can talk about discrimination. P7 children presented their learning on neurodiversity recently to parents to help everyone gain a better understanding of the challenges and benefits of being neurodiverse. Children explore how famous people have overcome barriers in their lives and have gone on to achieve success. This supports the school's inclusive and aspirational approach, helping the whole school community to celebrate differences and understand the importance of treating others with respect. The school library offers a wide range of texts which reflect diversity and help children to see characters like themselves and their families in the books they read.
- Senior leaders and staff recognise the importance of ensuring all children have access to the full range of activities and experiences on offer through the school. They are proactive in seeking to remove any barriers to participation and achievement. Senior leaders are highly aware of the changing circumstances of families and offer sensitive, discreet support as required to ensure all children benefit from the range of opportunities available.

## 3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

very 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

- Overall, attainment in literacy and numeracy is very good. A minority of children exceed national expectations across all levels. Children with additional support needs are making strong progress.

### Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, attainment in literacy and English is very good. In P1, most children achieve the expected CfE level in reading and writing, and almost all in listening and talking. By P4, most children achieve the expected CfE level in writing and almost all achieve this in reading and listening and talking. By P7, most children achieve the expected level in writing and almost all in reading and in listening and talking. The majority of children in P4 and P7 are exceeding national expectations in reading.

### Listening and talking

- At early level, almost all children can hear and say the different single sounds made by letters. They enjoy participating actively in storytelling. They listen and respond to others appropriately. At first level, almost all children communicate effectively, take turns, and contribute at appropriate times when engaging with others for a range of purposes. They understand and apply techniques such as eye contact and body language. At second level, almost all children respect and build on the contributions of others very well. Children communicate clearly and confidently and have developed skills in delivering organised presentations. They can understand the difference between fact and opinion in spoken texts. Children are confident in explaining the skills they need for effective talking and listening appropriate to their stage.

### Reading

- At early level, children use their knowledge of sounds, letters and patterns to read words. They engage well with the texts that are read to them. They answer questions to help them predict what will happen next in a text. At first level, children read familiar texts aloud with some expression and fluency. They know the difference between fiction and non-fiction texts. They express their own ideas about writer's use of language, for example in descriptions of setting. At second level, children are enthusiastic about reading books in printed and digital formats and explain clear preferences for favourite authors. They read fluently, using expression well to interest and engage listeners. They can discuss the main ideas within a text and are clear about the features of different genres of writing. Children in the upper stages develop their own skills in reading through supporting younger pupils with reading.

### Writing

- At early level, children can write with appropriate spacing and use capital letters and full stops when forming sentences. They have good pencil control and form most letters legibly. They are

beginning to write to reflect their own experiences and feelings. At first level, children use relevant and interesting vocabulary and other language features to entertain the reader. They regularly write across a range of genres and assess their progress using success criteria to help them improve. At second level, children use paragraphs confidently across a range of genres. They know and use a range of punctuation to increase the effectiveness of their writing. Children identify clearly what they need to do to improve their writing, especially through using vocabulary, imagery and grammatical structures to make their writing impactful. Children working beyond the expected level in P7 are particularly skilled at assessing their own and each other's writing, and respectfully make suggestions for improvements.

### **Numeracy and mathematics**

- Overall, attainment in numeracy and mathematics is very good. In P1, most children early level. By P4, almost all children achieve first level, and by P7 almost all children achieve second level. The majority of children in P7 are exceeding national expectations in numeracy.

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

- At early level, children add and subtract within ten. They use coins within their play and use their number knowledge to create shops and other areas in the classroom, exploring their interests. They compare lengths of objects using non-standard measures and estimate and measure weight in grams. At first level, children recall multiplication facts and understand arrays. They give change from £10 when buying several items. They lack confidence in recording amounts in pounds only and pence only. At second level, children show a good knowledge of place value. Further work is required when multiplying by 10, 100 and 1000. Children are confident when finding equivalent fractions, decimals and percentages. They convert metres to millimetres, litres to millilitres and kilograms to grams, and can describe when each unit of measurement would be used. A few children at second level demonstrated their learning of prime numbers and square numbers.

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

- At early level, children can understand the language of front, behind, right and left when navigating their own creative maps using a programmable toy during their play. At first level, children can name a variety of two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects and discuss their properties. They can correctly label the four points on a compass and can provide examples of applying their symmetry learning in art activities. At second level, children are confident when drawing acute, obtuse, right and reflex angles. They know how many degrees are in a straight line, right angle and within each part of an equilateral triangle. They can describe how to make a three-dimensional object from a net.

### **Information handling**

- At early level, children can use their knowledge of colour, shape, size and other properties to match and sort items in a variety of ways. At first level, children create tables to display their data and can use tally marks. They need to work on creating data handling charts. At second level, children can describe when you would want to use a Venn diagram, line graph, bar chart and pie chart. They can create and label these appropriately.

### **Attainment over time**

- Senior leaders have developed very effective approaches to monitoring attainment in literacy and numeracy. They clearly demonstrate a sustained high level of attainment over time. For each of the last seven years where data is available most or almost all children at P1, P4 or P7 meet or exceed the expected CfE level as related to their age and stage. Almost all learners, including those with a barrier to learning are making very good progress. Approaches to ensure professional judgements are reliable for literacy and numeracy are very well embedded. Teachers also track achievement across all curricular areas. Senior leaders should continue to

support teachers to improve the reliability of professional judgements across these other curricular areas.

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

- Children are achieving skills through a wide range of well-planned activities. Children at all stages develop teamwork, leadership and communication skills through play, outdoor learning, child-led clubs and activities. Children take increasing responsibility as they move through the school. For example, children develop leadership skills as house captains, 'eco reps', through buddying and as pupil voice leaders.
- Children's successes are celebrated at assemblies, on digital platforms and in classrooms. Staff track pupil participation in both in-school and out-of-school activities. They are proactive in ensuring children who do not yet participate in activities are given the opportunities to do so. Senior leaders have correctly identified the need to revisit their skills framework and strengthen approaches to developing the young workforce.

### **Equity for all learners**

- All staff have a very good understanding of children and their families. This enables them to provide a range of effective interventions which ensure children make very good progress and achieve well. Children who experience barriers to their learning are very well supported by teachers and pupil support assistants. They have clear targets that are helping them to progress very well from prior levels of attainment.
- The school has made effective use of the funds they receive through PEF. These have been used to support children with literacy and play-based resources.

## Practice worth sharing more widely

All staff have been involved in developing play-based learning, outdoor learning or cross-stage learning. These are providing children with very effective learning experiences in a range of interesting contexts. These approaches to learning are supporting children to be more resilient and engaged with their learning. They are also supporting improvements in wellbeing and high levels of attainment and achievement.

## 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.