

Summarised inspection findings

Toward Primary School

Argyll and Bute Council

22 May 2018

Key contextual information

Toward Primary School is on the Cowal Peninsula, seven miles from Dunoon. It serves the village of Toward and the surrounding area. At the time of inspection, the school roll was 28. The school has an acting headteacher who has been in post since January 2018. In the year prior to her appointment, the school has had a number of changes in leadership.

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

- The school has a shared vision and set of values and aims which inform its work. These were developed with staff, children and parents. They are reflected in the 'School Promise' with which all children are familiar. The vision, values and aims are evident in the life of the school through the very positive relationships and the supportive learning environment. Staff demonstrate an understanding of the context of the school and know the children and their families very well. The school has undergone a number of changes in leadership over the past twelve months. Despite this, staff have maintained their focus on supporting all children to achieve their potential. The nurturing and inclusive ethos is impacting positively on children's wellbeing and achievements.
- Staff work well together to improve the work of the school and to provide positive learning experiences for children. They have continued to do this throughout the time they have been without a permanent headteacher. The acting headteacher has been in post since January. In this short time, she has brought a sense of purpose and direction that is appreciated by staff and parents. She has engaged staff in reflecting on the work of the school and identifying areas for improvement. Going forward, there is a need to re-establish more formal and systematic approaches to self-evaluation. These approaches should include seeking the views of children, parents and partners. This will enable staff to prioritise improvement work.
- Staff use a range of assessments to monitor children's progress in literacy and numeracy. The acting headteacher has begun to collate this data to provide a helpful overview of progress and attainment across the school. The tracking and monitoring system being developed will enable the acting headteacher and staff to monitor the progress of individuals as well as groups of children facing additional challenges to ensure all children make appropriate progress. This work is at the early stages. We have discussed with staff how this can be developed further and used to identify improvement targets to raise attainment.
- The school improvement plan includes appropriate targets that reflect local and national priorities. Staff have recently reviewed progress towards these targets and prioritised key actions to take forward. Going forward, staff should ensure that improvement planning is more clearly linked to self-evaluation. There is evidence that this has been the case in previous years. There is scope for planned improvement work to have a stronger focus on improved outcomes for children that can be measured.

- Staff show a strong commitment to professional learning and are using this to improve outcomes for children. For example, staff have developed their abilities to deliver modern languages, outdoor learning and physical activities such as yoga and dance. They have begun to engage with the National Benchmarks and are developing approaches to assessment. They work well with colleagues in their partner school and are proactive in looking outwards to identify practice from schools in other local authorities that they can learn from.
- Children at all stages are involved in the work of the school through 'school meetings'. All children attend these meetings where they are consulted on issues affecting them and their views are sought. They are positive about the contribution they make to the school. There is scope to extend children's voice further and provide more formal leadership opportunities for children.

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

- Across the school children are happily engaged in their learning. The climate for learning is purposeful and organised. Children benefit from positive relationships and mutual respect which is supporting them to learn and achieve. They are aware of what is expected of them and this is reinforced by daily reference to the 'School Promise'. They work well together and are developing independent learning skills. They are motivated by the learning which meets the needs of most children appropriately. Teachers should continue to ensure that there is appropriate challenge for all. Children would benefit from more opportunities to make choices and influence what and how they are learning. Staff should continue to develop ways for children to take responsibility and lead learning across the curriculum. There are opportunities for children to work together across the school. This is resulting in a strong sense of community with older children supporting younger learners well.
- Overall, staff engage children well in their learning. The purpose of learning is explained clearly to children. On a few occasions, there is shared discussion to identify success criteria. While staff use plenary sessions to encourage children to reflect on what they have learned and think about next steps, they have agreed that there is a need to improve the impact this has on children's learning. Teachers plan lessons that engage and motivate children and resources are well chosen, for example, using digital technology for problem solving. The local area is well used to enhance children's learning. Staff are developing the use of higher-order questioning to challenge children's thinking. This should continue to be a focus for professional development.
- Teachers support children well individually, encouraging and prompting their thinking throughout lessons. There is inconsistency in the quality of feedback teachers give to children both verbally and in writing. There is a need to link it more closely to success criteria to ensure it supports children to improve. There is scope to develop further opportunities for children to engage in peer and self-assessment to improve their understanding of their next steps in learning. We have asked the school to revisit the work they have done to develop approaches to engaging children in reflecting on their learning. Staff have begun to consider how to develop their use of learning logs for this purpose.
- Teachers use a range of assessment approaches to monitor the progress children are making. At present, there is an over-reliance on standardised or resource-based assessments. Staff have begun to develop holistic assessments that include reference to National Benchmarks. Developing further this type of approach will ensure that assessment is more focused and robust. There has been some moderation of writing with other local schools. There is a need to extend this in other areas of the curriculum. This will ensure staff develop shared expectations of the standards to be achieved.

- Staff plan appropriately using different formats for different purposes, for example, termly curriculum plans which are shared with children and parents. New curriculum trackers are providing a helpful overview of children's progress in different curriculum areas. This is still at an early stage. There is a need to ensure that planning takes account of individual children's prior learning. This will ensure teachers plan learning with appropriate pace and challenge. The tracking and monitoring system currently in development has potential to provide robust information about children's progress. Staff have made a good start by using this data to identify those requiring additional support or challenge. However, there is not yet evidence of the impact of this on children.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning and development pathways

- Curriculum pathways for numeracy and mathematics, and literacy and English are used by staff to provide guidance on expectations and progression within a level. Progression is planned and appropriate targets aligned to National Benchmarks. There is scope for staff to plan increased challenge and more opportunities for children to apply the literacy and numeracy skills they are developing in a variety of contexts.
- Staff recognise that they now need to review and develop a rolling programme of interdisciplinary learning (IDL) to ensure there is clear progression in skills and knowledge across all curricular areas. Developing progression pathways for each curriculum area will support staff to plan learning with appropriate breadth, depth and challenge. At present, there are gaps in the curriculum and staff need to ensure planning covers the full range of learning across all curriculum areas. There is also scope for children to have a stronger voice in planning learning.
- Children have the opportunity to use digital technologies in a range of learning experiences. The school must now develop a progressive pathway in digital learning to ensure children's skills are developing in a progressive and effective way to enhance their learning.
- As they review and develop curriculum pathways and IDL contexts, staff should take account of the curriculum design principles. These should be used flexibly to ensure that all children, including the highest attaining children, continue to make the best possible progress in their learning.

2.7 Partnerships : Impact on learners – parental engagement

- Parents feel welcome in the school and are positive about the warm, nurturing ethos and the supportive approaches of staff. The school shares information with parents through the use of newsletters and termly curriculum overviews. The wider achievement jotters, recently restarted, provide an effective link between home and school.
- The school has an active Parent Council (PC) which involves most parents. The PC is proactive in raising funds and using these to improve learning facilities. For example, they have recently funded a shelter for an outdoor classroom. They feel they are fully involved in the work of the school and are consulted appropriately.
- Most parents feel encouraged to be involved in their children's learning. There is scope for the school to develop more opportunities for parents and children to learn together and for parents to support their child's learning at home.

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

- Children's wellbeing underpins the school's vision. Staff use the wellbeing indicators to develop children's understanding of their own wellbeing. As a result, most children across the school can describe what it means to be respected and included and how they can keep safe, healthy and active.
- The school's approaches to wellbeing take account of the needs of the children and the context of the school. These approaches contribute to the strong family ethos which permeates the school community. As a result, there are very positive relationships across the school. The caring and nurturing ethos is having a positive impact on children's social and emotional wellbeing and supporting them to achieve.
- The health and wellbeing curriculum across the school includes learning both in class and across other contexts such as whole school activities, wider achievement and outdoor learning. There is a strong focus on social, emotional and physical wellbeing. The school's new curriculum tracking system enables staff to track children's progress in key areas of health and wellbeing. Staff now need to review how the school delivers other aspects of the health and wellbeing curriculum to ensure children experience a full breadth of learning in this area. Working with the new National Benchmarks will support his work.
- The school makes good use of the outdoors to promote children's wellbeing. Children benefit from a wide range of rich learning opportunities in the local area including Forest Schools, beach scavenging and walks. As a result children engage regularly in physical, investigative and creative activities. This is developing their confidence and supporting them to make positive choices, for example, promoting healthy lifestyles and assessing risk as part of their Forest School work.
- Staff identify children with additional support needs at an early stage and put in place support strategies and interventions in consultation with parents and carers. As a result, children are supported well to engage in their learning. The acting headteacher has recently introduced 'strategy sheets' to ensure that teachers are planning to meet the needs of all children who require additional support, including the highest attaining children. These provide a helpful overview of individual children's needs and the strategies currently being used to support them in class. The next step is to ensure that children who require them have appropriate targets in place. These should be regularly reviewed to ensure that support strategies and interventions are having a positive impact on children's progress. At present, the school's planning and recording procedures are too informal and this is resulting in a lack of clarity about decisions made and intended outcomes for children.

- The school works with a range of partners as appropriate to support young people. This includes Active Schools, Childsmile, the educational psychologist and speech and language service. Partners and parents are involved in child's planning meetings as appropriate.
- The school is committed to providing equality of opportunity for all children. Staff are proactive in seeking ways to involve all children in the life of the school and overcoming barriers to learning. As a result, almost all children feel included, engaged and involved. Pupil support assistants are deployed effectively in classes and provide effective support for children. Professional learning opportunities have been delivered to staff, including support assistants, to help them to meet children's needs, including training in autistic spectrum disorders, attachment disorder and specific interventions to support literacy and numeracy. There is scope to raise children's awareness further about issues relating to equality and diversity. The work done on rights education could be revisited to provide a greater focus on children's rights and develop children's understanding of discrimination and injustice.

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
- equality for all learners

Attainment in literacy and numeracy

- The school is unable to provide reliable data of attainment in literacy and numeracy over time. Teacher's involvement in moderation and the use of National Benchmarks has increased their confidence in assessing levels of attainment for each child. Based on their professional judgement including on-going assessment of learning, staff predict that the majority of children will meet expected levels of attainment by June 2018. The inspection team judge this to be an accurate reflection of the current attainment based on observation, discussion with children and examination of children's work. The school should now take necessary steps to raise attainment by providing clear strategic direction for the development of literacy and numeracy across the school.

Listening and talking

- At the early stages, children work well in pairs and small groups. They ask and answer questions and can explain what they are doing. In the upper stages, children talk confidently and articulately and listen well to teachers and each other. They regularly participate in debates. A next step would be to more formally plan listening and talking experiences to gather a range of evidence that demonstrates that children can apply the skills outlined in the National Benchmarks. At present, the school is not systematically tracking progress in listening and talking.

Reading

- At the early stages, children are developing their knowledge of phonics and can apply this to read words and familiar texts. In the upper stages, children read independently with increasing fluency. They are developing reading strategies such as skimming, scanning and predicting to read with comprehension and find information for different purposes. The school should continue to develop a reading culture where children at all stages are encouraged to read and discuss a wide range of texts regularly.

Writing

- Across the school, children write for a range of purposes. At the early stages, children are developing their fine motor skills to form letters and words. A few are using capital letters and full stops to support the meaning of their writing. By the end of the first level, most children are writing independently and can choose and organise their ideas and use simple punctuation in their writing. At the upper stages, children write fluently and use appropriate vocabulary to express their ideas. Structured writing lessons are supporting children to develop skills progressively. More regular feedback linked to focused success criteria that makes children's next steps clear would support improved progress in writing. The writing Benchmarks will support teachers to apply expected standards at each level. Children across the school would

benefit from more regular opportunities to write in a wider range of genres across the curriculum.

Numeracy

- Overall, attainment in numeracy is satisfactory. Most children are making appropriate progress. Almost all children are motivated and engaged in their numeracy lessons. The majority of children display confidence in recalling or applying previous knowledge and skills. Across the school, teachers build in reinforcement and consolidation of previously taught concepts. In the best lessons teachers encourage children to share their strategies with each other and to explore wrong answers. Across the school, staff should raise the level of challenge to continue to raise attainment in numeracy and mathematics.
- **Number:** Children count to 20 and beyond adding on and subtracting using concrete materials and mental calculations. There are examples of children using division and multiplication strategies to solve numerical questions and challenges. Children demonstrate knowledge of place value to one million in whole numbers and to two decimal places.
- **Money:** Across the school, children are developing awareness of money and its use in buying items and calculating costs and change. At an appropriate level, they are developing skills in estimating and calculating profit and loss.
- **Time:** At the early stages, children develop an awareness of time and timed events. They progress to learning about electronic timetables. Children can apply their learning to plan a journey linked to a school visit using real timetables for ferry and coach travel.
- **Measurement:** Children display sound knowledge of measurement using standard and non-standard units. Younger children measure using blocks, plastic links, straws and paper clips to measure hands and feet. Older children estimate and measure using a metre stick to identify lengths of objects and surfaces greater than 1 metre. They identify correctly lengths of 50 centimetres as half a metre.
- **Problem solving:** From an early stage children are developing problem solving strategies and talk confidently about these. They use digital technologies to 'beat the clock' and solve numerical puzzles.

Attainment over time

- Class teachers' records show that most children are making satisfactory or better progress in their learning in English language and mathematics. Staff professional development in moderation and assessment has increased their confidence in predicting progress and setting appropriate targets for learners. There is room to improve the pace of progress for higher attaining children by introducing more challenge in their learning and higher expectations. Staff acknowledge that there are gaps in children's learning in other curriculum areas. They should ensure that the newly introduced tracking system is used consistently to assess the progress of individual children in all curriculum areas.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Children benefit from working together in whole school learning events to support them to develop across the four capacities. The school has recently reintroduced the Skills Achievement Award to record skills development. Children have the opportunity to attend opera workshops in Strachur where they work with other local schools. Older children display leadership skills in the way they support younger children.

- They have visited a local oyster farm and tasted fresh oysters while learning about ecology and marine life to encourage them to develop citizenship skills. Within the local community, they plan and organise an annual Daffodil Tea for elderly residents where they entertain with songs and poetry.
- Staff make good use of the local environment to provide children with rich opportunities for achievement and skills development. This includes the beach school where learning takes place on the beach in all weathers. The school has a planned Forest School programme where the children at all stages develop a range of skills in the nearby forest one half day per week. They are developing skills of resilience, risk assessment, planning, building, working with clay tree models, making sustainable dens and tree swings. Children are encouraged to be independent and creative, working alone and in a team. They are set challenge tasks to allow progression in identified skills. Children are enthusiastic and talk confidently about the skills they are developing and how they are improving. A next step for staff would be to develop their approaches to tracking children's achievements to ensure all children experience breadth and progression in skills.

Equity for all learners

- Staff know the needs of individual children very well and teachers monitor their progress. They are at the early stages of using this information to monitor the impact on progress and attainment of any additional challenges children may face. The school is proactive in ensuring equality of opportunity for all children to participate and achieve success.

Setting choice of QI: 2.4 Personalised Support

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

- The caring and nurturing ethos across the school is resulting in very positive relationships. Staff know children and their families very well. This is ensuring children feel well supported. Almost all children think there is someone in school they can speak to if they feel worried or upset. Established routines, such as daily check ins, provide opportunities for children to share their feelings or concerns. Children are familiar with the wellbeing indicators and use these to talk about their wellbeing with staff.
- Children regularly discuss their learning with their teacher. There is scope for these discussions to be more focused on strengths and next steps in relation to learning intentions and success criteria. Learning targets are not yet a consistent feature across all learning. The re-introduction of learning logs will support this process by encouraging children to review their own learning and what they need to do to improve. A few children would benefit from increased challenge. The school has begun to identify the highest attaining children to ensure there are higher expectations about what they can achieve.
- Staff identify children requiring additional support at an early stage. They use the staged intervention process to plan support strategies and interventions and involve relevant partners and other agencies. Parents are involved from the outset of this process. There is a need for improved arrangements for recording and monitoring the support planned for individual children. The acting headteacher has made a positive start in addressing this.
- Staff are committed to supporting children's wellbeing and minimising barriers to learning. Support is targeted appropriately and interventions are put in place to ensure that children feel supported in their learning and included in the life of the school. This is resulting in an inclusive learning environment. The school should continue to develop approaches to monitoring the impact of interventions to ensure children make the best possible progress toward personalised targets.

Explanation of terms of quality

The following standard Education Scotland terms of quality 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.