

Summarised inspection findings

Anna Ritchie School

Aberdeenshire Council

25 February 2025

Key contextual information

Anna Ritchie School is an all-through special school situated in Peterhead, Aberdeenshire. The school roll is 81. The senior leadership team has seen a recent change with the appointment of a new deputy headteacher in January 2024. 9.9% of children and young people live in 20% most deprived data zones in Scotland.

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 headteacher provides effective leadership to the school community. Staff and families value her open and approachable manner. The headteacher and deputy headteachers are visible across the school and work well together to support children, young people and staff. All staff are committed to improving outcomes for all children and young people at the school. Parents say they feel listened to and valued.
- The headteacher has worked well with stakeholders to develop a clear vision, values and aims for the school. The school's vision focuses on developing children and young people's independence. The school's vision helps provide a clear purpose for the school. All staff model the school values well as part of their daily work. The headteacher correctly recognises the need to ensure that the school's values and aims are meaningful to children and young people. In partnership with the school community, staff should develop the values and aims further to make them more accessible and easily understood by all children and young people. This will help learners to understand better how the values contribute to the whole school community.
- The senior leadership team have recently introduced useful quality assurance activities that allow staff to engage more effectively in self-evaluation. All staff would now benefit from engaging more with self-evaluation frameworks in 'How good is our school? 4th edition'. The headteacher has developed helpful approaches to quality assure learning and teaching across the school. The senior leadership team carry out lesson observations, which help teachers to reflect on and improve their practice. A recent focus on learner engagement is beginning to support teachers to identify strengths and areas for improvement. The senior leadership team should continue to support teachers in evaluating the impact of changes they have made to their classroom practice. Together, they should consider how well changes to classroom practice are helping to improve outcomes for children and young people. Building on this positive start, the headteacher should now involve all teachers in agreeing clear expectations of what high-quality learning and teaching looks like at Anna Ritchie School. This will help to ensure all children experience consistently high-quality learning across the school.

- The headteacher and staff have agreed collegiate time for professional learning. At present, this involves a focus on developing sensory profiling across the school. This is supporting staff to develop a shared understanding of what effective sensory profiling entails. While at an early stage, sensory profiles have been introduced, which take account of individual learners needs well. The senior leadership team now need to monitor and track the impact of this work more rigorously to ensure that it leads to improved outcomes for children and young people.
- The headteacher has recently established links with cluster headteachers to review the quality of school improvement planning collaboratively. This partnership offers valuable opportunities for support and challenge, enabling the headteacher to explore better improvement areas and use data more effectively. To strengthen this process further, the senior leadership team should develop their skills in analysing a broader range of data to identify and prioritise improvement areas. The school improvement plan correctly identifies important areas for improvement relevant to the school's context. The senior leadership team should continue to review the school improvement plan to ensure identified priorities contribute to raising attainment. The senior leadership team should ensure greater clarity within school improvement planning on how they plan to measure and evaluate improvements.
- Across the school, the senior leadership team and teachers are committed to improving learners' outcomes. They engage well in opportunities to work collegiately. The senior leadership team foster a collaborative approach to leadership by involving staff in regular and ongoing solution-focused discussions as part of operational decision-making. They engage most teachers in helpful professional review and development meetings. This is helping teachers to reflect on professional standards. Most support staff attend annual personal review meetings. This helps support staff to reflect on their contribution to the school. The headteacher should now ensure that these discussions focus more explicitly on professional learning and development, linked more closely to school improvement priorities. All staff should continue to be supported to become more involved in self-evaluation activities. This will help them understand better how their learning and development contributes to school improvement. Staff participate in collegiate meetings, class consultations and discussions. These are helping them to build their confidence in contributing to and taking forward areas for improvement. This work now needs to be linked to school improvement priorities more closely. The senior leadership team need to develop a more strategic approach to help ensure self-evaluation leads to improvements across the school.
- A few staff take on defined leadership roles across the school. The senior leadership team should support all staff further to lead key areas of school improvement. The senior leadership team need to develop further staff's individual and collective roles in taking forward school improvement. This will ensure a greater sense of purpose and help enable improvement priorities to develop at an increased pace.
- A minority of children and young people have leadership opportunities through participating in the pupil council, organising fundraising events and carrying out school 'jobs'. Young people are proud of how they contribute to these aspects of the school. The pupil council have worked together well to create playground charters that focus on making good play choices and developing learner's social skills. Staff are at the early stages of involving children and young people in making decisions to improve the school's work. Children and young people are not always clear on how their views shape the school's work and lead to improvements. As planned, staff should support children and young people further to evaluate the impact of their leadership roles.

- The school has recently re-established a Parent Council. The Parent Council's role in the school previously focused on fundraising and organising events. The headteacher is beginning to involve parents in reviewing aspects of the school's work. The senior leadership team should consider extending this consultation to cover a broader range of areas to support improvement. For example, involving parents more fully in agreeing the school's plans for how they will use Pupil Equity Funding (PEF).
- Staff have a good understanding of the socio-economic context of the school community and use this knowledge well to identify children and young people who would benefit from more enhanced support. The school's PEF plan details a small number of targeted interventions in literacy. This focuses on improving children and young people's phonological awareness to develop and build their confidence in reading. The senior leadership team are beginning to use baseline data effectively to track individual children and young people's progress. The headteacher needs to continue to develop this work further to evaluate how effectively PEF is improving children and young people's outcomes.

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

- All staff develop positive and caring relationships with children and young people. This supports the respectful ethos based on the school's vision and values evident across the school. This nurturing and inclusive approach helps learners well as they move around the school throughout the day. All staff show an interest in children and young people within the wider context of their home and local community. They use their knowledge of each child or young person's needs effectively to inform their interactions with learners. This helps most children and young people to engage positively in their learning. In the few instances where children become dysregulated, staff support them effectively to regulate and reengage with their learning. Staff use plans, profiles and risk assessments appropriately to help meet the needs of learners who experience the greatest difficulties accessing their learning.
- In most lessons, teachers allow children and young people to have a say in what and how they learn. However, this frequently leads to learners choosing activities unrelated to planned learning. Teachers now need to incorporate a wider range of learning and teaching approaches to engage learners more effectively in planned learning. Teachers should incorporate more planned independent and collaborative experiences, including practical and desk-based tasks to help increase learners' engagement in their learning. Pupil support assistants help learners effectively to access their learning. This encourages learners to participate more actively in lessons. The majority of senior pupils participate well, with support, in independent learning activities and work successfully in small groups. A few children and young people need to be supported more effectively to develop their independence. They need to be allowed to make mistakes and check and self-correct their work with less adult prompting and intervention.
- The majority of lessons are not matched well to children and young people's needs. Teachers need to consider how to provide children and young people with learning with appropriate levels of challenge. The senior leadership team should continue to work with the staff team in exploring what high quality learning and teaching looks like at the school. Staff need to raise their expectations of what most learners are able to do.
- All teachers use a range of approaches including whole class visual timetables, signifiers and visuals to support well learners' understanding of their day, routines and activities. This increases predictability for children and young people and supports transitions. In the majority of classes, children and young people are encouraged to use signing, supported by adult modelling. A few children and young people use devices to help them communicate. Staff should develop further the school's inclusive communication environment using alternative and augmentative communication (AAC). This will help learners' abilities to communicate their needs and wants more effectively.

- The school has developed a rationale and creative spaces for play pedagogy in line with national guidance. Teachers are at the early stages in developing play-based approaches. Learners are presented with a range of activities, which offer choice and opportunities for them to learn through play. Staff now need to evaluate these experiences to consider how meaningful they are and how well they develop learners' communication skills.
- In the majority of classes, there are opportunities for children and young people to use digital technologies. All classes have an interactive whiteboard that is used by staff and learners in lessons. Teachers use these predominantly to present information or play videos. The majority of staff need to consider how to use this resource more meaningfully to help engage children and young people in their learning. Most older children and young people are able to use digital technologies, with support, to find information. Teachers need to continue to develop the use of digital technologies to enhance learners' experiences.
- Teachers plan learning experiences outdoors and in the local community that provide meaningful contexts for learning. Children and young people are known and valued within the local community. They are developing appropriate literacy, numeracy and communication skills during visits to the community café and local library. Teachers now need to develop further how they plan outdoor learning experiences that build more effectively on children and young people's prior learning.
- The majority of teachers use formative assessment approaches well to check children and young people's progress with their learning. The majority of learning activities build appropriately on children and young people's prior learning. The development and use of milestones to support literacy and numeracy is starting to help teachers make more accurate judgements in relation to national expectations. Teachers now need to develop and plan more varied assessment approaches to measure accurately children and young people's progress across all curriculum areas.
- Staff have not yet had opportunities to participate in moderation activities. The senior leadership team now need to support teachers to engage in moderation activities with each other, and colleagues from other schools. This will support teachers to develop their skills and confidence in making professional judgments.
- Teachers take responsibility for planning termly learning experiences using a local authority framework to ensure curriculum coverage and progression. They share daily plans with children and young people. This helps children and young people to know their routine for the day. All children and young people have an individualised education plan (IEP) that identifies their learning needs with clear targets to remove barriers to learning. Targets are agreed in partnership with parents. The majority of staff use information in IEPs well to support how they plan children and young people's learning. Summarised targets are prominently displayed in the majority of classrooms. Staff now need to ensure that learning targets in IEPs provide sufficient challenge for all children and young people.
- The senior leadership team have recently implemented approaches to check learners progress across all stages. They track and monitor coverage of milestones, pre-early, early and first level Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) experiences and outcomes in literacy and numeracy for all learners. The senior leadership team have identified the need to develop these approaches further to make them more manageable and accessible for staff. The senior leadership team should develop further how they systematically review and evaluate their approaches to tracking and monitoring. This will allow them to monitor the quality of assessment, recording and tracking in each class, providing support and challenge to teachers as necessary. The senior leadership team should support teachers to develop their

skills and abilities in analysing a wider range of data to improve learning and teaching across all stages.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- The school's curriculum sets out relevant key outcomes, which focus on developing children and young people's communication, independence, and decision-making skills. The curriculum supports learners to understand how these skills enable and support them to contribute to the school and wider community.
- Children and young people's progress in the broad general education (BGE) is guided by the Foundational Milestones, Milestones, national Benchmarks, and planned targets in their IEPs. Most children access appropriate learning across all curriculum areas in the BGE.
- Progression frameworks based on CfE experiences and outcomes are in place for literacy and numeracy from early level. A newly introduced local authority framework is beginning to support teachers to plan to meet the needs of children operating at foundational and milestone levels more effectively. Teachers' development of a more sensory-based curriculum is helping to meet more complex learners needs better.
- The senior phase offers young people a narrow range of National Qualifications, with limited opportunities for personalisation and choice. The school has recently introduced more awards to enhance accreditation at the senior phase. This offers young people greater choice. Skills for life are a key feature of the senior phase curriculum. Young people learn through in-class lessons and in real-life contexts, such as shopping, cooking and community events. The senior phase is enhanced by courses at a local college and opportunities for work experience. Teachers need to continue to develop the curriculum to help raise attainment for all learners.
- Across the school, children and young people receive their entitlement of two hours of quality physical education each week. These opportunities support children and young people to develop their physical and social wellbeing through participating in group and individual sports. A minority of children and young people who require enhanced support engage regularly in movement programmes and use specialist equipment to support their postural and health needs.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- The Parent Council supports the school well through a range of fundraising activities. These have helped the school to offer activities such as school dances, which children and young people enjoy. Parents have recently appointed a new chair to the Parent Council, who is keen to help ensure the Parent Council continues to support the school. The Parent Council should continue with plans to involve parents more in evaluating the work of the school. This should include encouraging parents to review and contribute more effectively to school improvement planning.
- Almost all parents are highly complementary of the work the school. They appreciate the caring sense of community across the school in which their children and young people learn. Most parents would appreciate more regular updates on what their child or young person has learned each day at school. The senior leadership team should support teachers to develop more consistent approaches to keep parents informed of their child or young person's learning.

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

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

- All staff treat children and young people with high levels of dignity and respect. They understand each child or young person's needs well. Staff pay particular attention to developing their understanding of how each child or young person communicates their feelings. This helps children and young people to know that they are listened to. All children and young people, where appropriate, know there are adults in the school who they trust and can talk to about any issues affecting them. Children and young people learn in a school where they know they are valued and cared for. All staff develop and maintain positive relationships with learner's parents. They listen effectively to any concerns they may have regarding their child or young person. This helps almost all parents to know that their views are respected. Overall, staff's approach to how they engage with children and young people and their parents supports a strong sense of community across the school.
- Staff are developing their use of the wellbeing indicators to inform how they plan to meet children and young people's needs. Their focus on keeping learners safe is effective in supporting them, where appropriate, to develop their understanding of risks. This includes, when walking around the local community and when being online. Younger children learn about the importance of hygiene when baking. Older young people shop in the local community for ingredients for dishes, which they prepare. This is helping all children and young people to develop their understanding of how different foods contribute to a healthy diet. This includes broadening children and young people's diet to include foods new to them. All children and young people access the school swimming pool. The pool has facilities to create a calm environment, which includes lights and music. Most children and young people learn to swim during their time at the school. This helps them to develop their skills and confidence in water. Children and young people enjoy their time in the pool. Older children develop their swimming skills further in the local community swimming pool. Teachers and partners use the local community well to help children and young people develop their wellbeing outdoors. Staff now need to deepen their understanding of the wellbeing indicators and the importance they play in learner's outcomes. Teachers should consider how they can use the language of the wellbeing indicators more regularly throughout the school, linked to wellbeing activities. This should include considering how the wellbeing indicators can help evaluate individual learners progress, and the school's improvement journey.
- Staff's strong relationships with children and young people supports them to attend school. Children and young people are happy and enjoy their lessons. As a result, attendance at the school is above the national average. A few learners' attendance has increased significantly when compared to their previous placements.
- The school complies effectively with almost all statutory duties. The senior leadership team ensure staff have all the information they require regarding each learner's needs. A wide range of appropriate risk assessments are in place to ensure all children and young people are kept

safe in the school and when on learning visits outwith the school. Emergency evacuation plans support staff well to know how to help a few learners who require assistance to exit the building in the event of an emergency. Medical risk assessments ensure staff meet children and young people's medical needs effectively. The senior leadership team need to ensure the school's child protection policy is reviewed to include references to the most up to date national guidance.

- All children and young people have IEPs, which detail each learner's needs well. IEPs capture each child or young person's individualised targets effectively. Targets focus mostly on each child or young person's barriers to their learning. This supports staff to plan lessons, which help children and young people access their learning. The senior leadership team should continue to develop how they track and monitor each child or young person's progress against their individual targets. This should include considering how regularly targets are reviewed to support evidencing learner's progress.
- Staff's aspirations that all learners will "become confident contributors in their local and wider communities" are reflected in the school's vision. They focus effectively on developing children and young people's independence. They plan regular visits to facilities in the local community to ensure that all children and young people, where possible, have a good understanding of their local community. Parents speak extremely highly of how well their child or young person is known and valued in the local community. This helps children and young people feel included as important members of their local community.
- Festivals and celebrations are discussed in classes and at school assemblies. This helps children and young people to develop their understanding of other faiths and cultures. Teachers should develop further how they support learners to develop their understanding of issues related to equality and diversity.
- A few learners attend school as part of a shared placement with their local mainstream school. This supports these children and young people to maintain links with their peers in the local community. The senior leadership team need to continue to monitor these arrangements closely to ensure they contribute positively to each child or young person's wellbeing. A few learners attend the school on a part-time basis. The senior leadership team, with the support of the local authority, need to work to ensure these learners receive their full entitlement to education.
- The senior leadership team track and monitor care experienced learner's progress closely. Initial evidence identifies that these children and young people are making good progress against their targets identified in their IEPs.

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

Broad General Education (BGE)

- The small number of children and young people in each class and the range of their additional support needs (ASN) renders comparisons of groups or cohorts invalid. From observations of learning and reviewing children and young people's work, attainment in literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics is satisfactory. Most children and young people in the BGE phase of education are working at CfE pre-early, early or first level.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, taking account of individual learner profiles, the majority of children and young people are making satisfactory progress in literacy and English. A few children and young people are making good progress.
- Most learners are working well towards achieving pre-early level milestones. A minority of learners are working towards achieving early level. Most learners are capable of attaining more. Teachers need to raise their expectations of what these children and young people can do to ensure they attain as best as possible. Teachers now need to ensure that targets and learning experiences provide all learners with sufficient challenge. They should consider how alternative reading and writing tools could support children and young people better to develop their literacy skills.

Listening and talking

- The majority of children and young people are beginning to develop their listening and talking skills. The majority of children and young people working at milestones respond consistently to routines generating vocalisations in response to sensory stimulus, people and objects. A minority participate in communication exchanges using preferred methods and join in with signs, actions or movements relating to familiar stimulus. A few children and young people working at early level join in conversations and use a simple sequence to retell a story. Most children and young people need a greater focus on developing their communication skills. This will allow all children and young people to participate more meaningfully in conversations using their preferred methods of communication.

Reading

- Staff across the school are working well to establish a reading culture. PEF interventions in reading are supporting a few learners to make accelerated progress in this area. Most children and young people working at milestones show an interest in a range of sensory stories. They explore a storybook to find objects and pictures. Teachers should develop opportunities for children and young people to be more involved in story telling using AAC. At early level, the majority of children and young people understand and recognise characters within a story. A

few explore sounds, letters and words and understand how they work together. As a result, children and young people build their enjoyment in reading. Most children and young people at the upper levels of milestones and early level need to focus more on developing depth in reading skills and move away from an overreliance on enjoyment and choice experiences. This should include extending the range of texts children and young people use in their learning.

Writing

- Most children and young people working at the early stages of milestones can hold, grasp and release tools for writing. They show an interest in mark making and create simple patterns and sequences. A few children and young people overwrite pre-written shapes and words. They copy, form shapes and make drawings. Most children and young people show progress from prior levels of attainment. At early level, the majority of children and young people are developing their writing skills through independent mark making, over writing or forming letters and numbers. The majority of children and young people need to develop their independent functional writing skills further. A few young people working at first level enjoy creating texts of their choice. They would benefit from further development of grammar and spelling strategies to help them understand unfamiliar words.

Numeracy and mathematics

- The majority of children and young people are making satisfactory progress in numeracy and mathematics. A minority of children and young people need to be further challenged in developing their numeracy skills. Teachers need to plan for children and young people to experience increased opportunities to progress their numeracy and mathematical skills across the curriculum.

Number, money and measure

- The majority of children working at pre-early level milestones are exploring numbers through counting rhymes and songs. They show an awareness of number sequences and recognise numbers that come next in a forward number word sequence. They are developing an understanding of numbers representing quantities. The majority of children working at the later stages of milestones count, with support, to identify a total number of items. At early level most children and young people count to ten. Most children at first level count out coins to pay for items.
- Across all levels, children and young people use visual timetables to make links between daily events and the sequence of time. At pre-early and early level, they are developing their understanding of size, comparing sizes and experimenting with familiar items such as units of measure. A few children participate in water play and baking experiences, using language related to weighing and measuring. Children and young people should continue to be supported to develop and apply their knowledge and skills of number, money and measure in real-life contexts.

Shape, position and movement

- At pre-early and early level children and young people are investigating and exploring a range of objects and shapes. They match or sort simple shapes through practical activities including puzzles and digital games. At first level learners identify, name and explore the properties of 2D shapes and 3D objects through activities and workbook tasks. Children and young people explore symmetry through 2D shapes and drawing. Children and young people, where appropriate, need to develop their skills further in all aspects in shape, position and movement.

Information handling

- At pre-early and early levels a minority of learners use signs and charts to gather information about their day. Learners at first level gather and display information using tally charts and

simple bar graphs.

Attainment over time

Broad General Education

- Almost all children and young people are making satisfactory progress in literacy and numeracy. IEP targets and annual reports show that children and young people are making satisfactory progress against their personal targets compared to prior levels of attainment. The senior leadership team now need to develop an appropriate system that will allow staff to track attainment over time more effectively.

Senior Phase

- A few young people in the senior phase, gain National Qualification unit awards at levels 1 to 3. These are limited mostly to literacy, numeracy, and personal achievement awards. A few young people have gained full course awards at National 3 level. Young people are achieving Saltire awards through their participation in work placements and college experiences. The senior phase curriculum offer currently restricts young people's attainment. Teachers need to develop the senior phase curriculum further to offer young people increased opportunities to attain qualifications in a broader range of subjects than currently offered.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Children and young people's achievements are recognised and celebrated in class and at assemblies. They are rightly very proud when their achievements are recognised through school's awards, including star of the week. The majority of children and young people are proud to share their achievements with others across the school community. Children and young people are developing their independence and communication skills in a variety of activities. These include outdoor learning, music concerts, charity fundraising events and residential experiences.
- The senior leadership team are successfully establishing community links to provide young people with more personal achievement activities. A few learners in the senior phase attend college and work experience placements successfully. As a result, these young people are developing their skills for learning, life and work. This includes developing their skills in sustainability and leadership. Senior leaders and teachers should now track and monitor the skills that all young people are developing through their participation in these activities. This will help young people to understand and identify the skills they are developing and reflect on their own progress.

Equity for all learners

- Senior leaders and staff understand children and young people's needs and social and the economic backgrounds of the local community well. They use PEF to fund literacy interventions, which support the majority of children and young people entitled to support from PEF. These interventions are designed to improve children and young people's abilities to access their learning. PEF also supports additional staffing to target those children and young people with more complex needs to reduce barriers to learning. Early indications shows that this is helping a few children and young people to improve their reading skills. Senior leaders should now monitor and evaluate the impact of these interventions on reducing the attainment gap more effectively. They should also consider interventions which align with the changing complexity of the cohort of the school.
- Almost all young people move on successfully to their local college or a suitable placement within adult services after school. The school engages effectively with partners to plan post school transitions. These transitions are planned well taking account of each young person's

additional support needs. This leads to all young people sustaining their post school destination successfully.

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.