

Summarised inspection findings

Munlochy Primary School

The Highland Council

26 March 2024

Key contextual information

Munloch Primary School is a small, rural school situated in the village of Munloch, in The Highland Council. The school campus includes a main building, annexed huts and the village hall. At the time of inspection, the school roll was 67, with children taught across three multi-stage classes. The headteacher joined the school eight years ago as principal teacher. He has been headteacher for two years and is supported by an acting principal teacher. He has a shared headship with Tore Primary School. There have been significant changes to teaching staff over the last year. Across the school, a minority of children require additional support. Almost all children live in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation zones 5 to 8.

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

- Since taking up post in 2022, the headteacher has established open, positive and trusting relationships with children, staff and parents. They have a high level of respect for the headteacher and feel valued and welcome within the school. He fosters a collaborative approach to leadership, involving staff in discussions and decision making. There is effective collegiate working between teachers and support staff. As a result, all staff find it rewarding to be a member of Munloch Primary School.
- Staff and children have created a positive and welcoming ethos across the school. The school values of honesty, kindness and courage were developed and agreed with stakeholders in 2018. All staff model the school values well as part of their daily practice. Children receive recognition of their good choices when displaying the values in their interactions through 'Munloch Stars' and house points. The headteacher has plans to review and refresh the vision and values with all stakeholders to ensure they are relevant and ambitious for the school. Parents would welcome this opportunity to contribute to the school's work.
- Since 2023, there have been significant changes to the teaching team. The headteacher has managed the situation carefully to minimise the impact on children's learning. In a short space of time, he has nurtured a supportive and enthusiastic staff team who are focused on improving the experiences of children across the school. The headteacher works closely with staff to identify improvement activities aligned to priorities in the school improvement plan. As a next step, he should ensure the success of improvement priorities is evaluated using clear and measurable outcomes.
- The headteacher has developed a clear approach to quality assuring learning and teaching in the school. He carries out bi-annual lesson observations and leads focus groups with children to support the teachers to reflect on and improve their practice. The headteacher uses How Good is Our School? 4th edition to support teachers to evaluate the quality of learning and teaching. As a staff team, they identify strengths and areas for improvement with increasing accuracy. The headteacher should support teachers to evaluate these areas more rigorously to

inform the development of a learning and teaching policy. He should involve all teachers in agreeing clear expectations about what high-quality learning and teaching looks like at Munloch Primary School. This will help to ensure all children experience consistently high-quality learning across the school.

- Staff speak very positively about their opportunities to work with colleagues across the cluster and associated schools group (ASG). They benefit from joint professional learning and the expertise of colleagues in developing their skills. The headteacher plans professional learning sessions, drawing upon research, to challenge teachers' thinking and practice. Teachers engage positively with these sessions and carry out small tests of change within their class as a result. The headteacher should now support teachers to evaluate the impact of these changes to classroom practice on improving outcomes for children. This will help to inform school wide approaches identified through a learning and teaching policy.
- The headteacher is supportive of staff who wish to take on leadership roles and staff speak positively about their professional discussion with colleagues. This approach is supporting staff to have a clearer understanding of the school's improvement journey. The acting principal teacher has a management responsibility for the school in the absence of the headteacher. He takes the lead across cluster schools for developing children's understanding of rights linked to the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Currently the headteacher leads most pupil and staff development activities. The staff team are now well placed to build on their leadership roles by linking directly to improving the quality of learning, teaching and assessment. This will support the headteacher to manage the pace of change effectively.
- The headteacher seeks parental feedback regularly to support improvements to the school's approaches. For example, the headteacher is currently consulting on communication and homework. Parents welcome a voice in these areas to understand more clearly how their children are progressing in school. The headteacher should continue to develop approaches to involving all stakeholders effectively in self-evaluation. For example, the planned review and development of the vision and values, to support the development of the curriculum rationale, would benefit from the views of children, staff and parents.
- Staff are at the early stages of involving all children in making decisions through pupil leadership groups. These include young leaders of learning, digital safety and rights respecting groups. Children use 360 audit tools and gather opinions and feedback from their peers to develop useful action plans. They have further leadership opportunities through organising fundraising events and as house captains and vice captains. As a result, the majority of children feel their views are listened to. They are not always clear on how their views shape the work of the school and lead to improvements. As planned, staff should support children to evaluate the impact of their work and recognise the leadership skills they are developing.
- The headteacher meets termly with staff to review children's progress in literacy and numeracy. They discuss the support children require to stay on track with their learning. As a result, teachers plan differentiated learning to support children's progress in literacy and numeracy. Staff have a good understanding of the socio-economic context of their community and use this knowledge well to identify children who would benefit from additional support. The headteacher makes use of Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) to resource targeted support in literacy. This approach is improving children's confidence and fluency when reading aloud. The headteacher should ensure clear measures are in place to enable staff to evaluate more effectively the impact of interventions. This will help staff make informed decisions about approaches that should be embedded into children's learning experiences. Moving forward, the headteacher should consult parents and children about the use of PEF each session.

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

- Staff promote positive, nurturing relationships and as a result, almost all children feel safe, happy and supported at school. Staff create a friendly and inclusive ethos across the school, modelling positive relationships through their interactions with children and each other.
- Overall, most children engage well in their learning for short periods of time. Across the school, children experience consistent low-level disruption to their learning. For example, in almost all lessons, there are examples where children disengage from learning. A minority of children do not consistently listen well to adults and distract peers from their work. Staff should draw upon the clear guidance provided by the local authority which provides examples of effective practice in this area. They should now revisit their positive relationships policy to develop clearer expectations about what purposeful learning looks like in classes. In addition, staff should link this to children's learning about the rights of all to help children understand how to support others to learn free from disruption and distraction. The headteacher should consider this work when reviewing the school vision and values to help all children understand their role in supporting everyone's rights.
- In almost all lessons, teachers share the purpose of learning well with clear instructions and explanations. In most lessons, teachers use questioning effectively to check children's understanding of key concepts and extend their learning further. In strong examples, teachers use open questions that support children to explain their learning and thinking. This supports children well to develop higher-order thinking skills. Teachers provide regular verbal feedback during lessons and in plenaries. Teachers are at the early stages of using effective written feedback. They should continue to develop approaches to feedback to ensure next steps for children are clearly identified.
- In literacy and numeracy lessons, teachers plan activities effectively that meet the needs and different abilities of children. They plan opportunities for children to contribute to class and group discussions well. However, across the school, lessons are predominantly teacher-led which is affecting the pace of learning. Teachers should now review timetables and the structure of lessons to ensure that learning provides appropriate pace and challenge. They should consider the use of task boards to support children to take responsibility for their learning and develop increasing independence. In addition, the headteacher should support teachers to review the balance of the curriculum to plan opportunities for children to revisit known skills more effectively. This will support children to have time to practise and improve taught skills more regularly.
- Staff are at the early stages of developing play pedagogy for younger children. They plan appropriate activities that support children's literacy, numeracy and fine-motor skills. Children engage positively with planned activities and develop their communication and social skills well when working with their peers. Interactions between staff and children are helpful, supportive

and respectful. A next step would be for staff to engage with national practice guidance to continue to develop experiences that match children's age and stage. They need to consider the balance between teacher-directed and child-led experiences to develop further children's independence, resilience and problem-solving skills.

- The local authority provides all children in P5 to P7 with a laptop to use in school and support home learning. Teachers plan opportunities for children to develop and apply their digital skills in relevant ways across a range of contexts. Children use laptops confidently to carry out numeracy activities, research and create music. Children representing the digital safety group share information and good practice with their peers to support safe use of the internet.
- Teachers plan learning for children in all areas of the curriculum over the school year using The Highland Council progression pathways. Within interdisciplinary learning, children collaborate with their teachers to plan and shape their learning using a range of approaches. The headteacher has rightly identified that staff are exploring the best approaches to engaging and challenging children in their learning across the curriculum. Teachers should continue to review their approach to linking learning across different subjects to ensure that skills are taught progressively. Staff should now reflect on their understanding of high-quality learning and teaching and develop a whole school approach. This policy should highlight key pedagogy that will be used consistently across all classes.
- The headteacher meets with teachers termly to track children's progress and achievement in literacy and numeracy. Staff use these discussions well to focus on children who are beyond and below national expectations for their age. Teachers use a range of assessment data to support their professional judgements on achievement of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels and to measure progress in learning. They are developing termly, high-quality assessments to enable children to show application of learning. Teachers are also beginning to work with colleagues across the ASG to develop a shared understanding of children's attainment. This is supporting them to make increasingly reliable judgements about the progress children make in their learning. The headteacher should continue to support teachers to engage more regularly in moderation activities. This will help teachers to develop a shared understanding of national expectations for children's achievement of CfE levels and national Benchmarks. This should support teachers to make more robust judgements about children's progress and attainment and provide greater consistency of professional judgements.
- The headteacher gathers data about the progress of cohorts of children, including those who require support with their learning. Teachers are beginning to identify any gaps in learning as a result of their analysis of attainment data. The headteacher should continue to share this information regularly with teachers to help them to plan learning at the right level of difficulty for all children. Furthermore, the headteacher should review more regularly how well learning gaps are being closed. This should help staff to clearly identify how effectively the school is accelerating progress in closing the attainment gap.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- The headteacher is involving all stakeholders to review the school's curriculum rationale to reflect national guidance, the school context and children's rights. Initial consultation has taken place and will be developed further throughout this session. This should support staff to ensure the curriculum reflects the school values and ensure relevance for children in Munloch Primary. Staff should work with partners and the wider community to develop the curriculum further to help children develop skills for learning, life and work.
- Teachers use a combination of local authority pathways and school devised pathways for all curriculum areas to support children to build on prior learning. Learning pathways are built on the experiences and outcomes and national Benchmarks of CfE. Teachers use an interdisciplinary model for social studies, expressive arts and technologies which supports the multi-stage class model. Teachers should review their approach to interdisciplinary planning to ensure that the skills progression is evident. In addition, they now need to look closely at the progress of children across the curriculum.
- Teachers use the school's progression pathway for physical education (PE) to support planning and progression in learning experiences. They provide children with opportunities to take part in two hours of PE per week. Due to the limitations of the school building, children and staff walk to the nearby village hall for PE lessons. Children in P3 to P7 benefit from high-quality input from a PE specialist as part of their weekly entitlement.
- All children receive their entitlement to 1+2 languages with teachers using a progression pathway effectively to develop children's knowledge and skills in French. Teachers also plan annually a block of learning in Scots language as a whole school focus.
- Staff are at the early stages of developing outdoor learning and are beginning to explore their approach to this area. Currently, teachers plan activities for children to take their classroom learning outdoors. The headteacher has identified that, as a team, they should now plan to make better use of the natural environment surrounding the school to promote children's curiosity and discovery.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- Almost all parents feel staff know their child well and that the school is well led and managed. Almost all parents feel comfortable approaching the school if they have questions or concerns. They talk very positively about the care and support the staff team provide for children and their families. The school benefits from an active Parent Council and parent body who are keen to support in a range of ways. Parents enjoy opportunities to be involved in the school with most feeling involved in helping with the work of the Parent Council. They lead a range of fundraising activities to purchase resources that support children's learning and enhance their experiences. They plan events that provide social opportunities for children which enhances children's experiences as part of the community.
- The headteacher communicates with parents regularly through newsletters and consultations. Parents appreciate the focus the headteacher has had on improving communication with families although, at times, would like more notice of events. A minority of parents would like clearer guidance and communication about homework to help them to support their child's learning at home. They have concerns that the high turnover of staff has led to inconsistencies when planning homework.

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

- Led ably by the headteacher, all staff work very well as a team to meet the needs of children across the school. They know children, families and the community very well. Parents talk very positively about staff's knowledge of children and the warm and nurturing ethos they have created across the school. As a team, in a short space of time, they have a collective focus on supporting children's wellbeing. Collaborative working across the staff team is a strength of the school.
- Children and staff work well together to develop their understanding of children's rights and the articles from UNCRC. Led by the acting principal teacher, the Rights Respecting Committee supports children to have a better understanding about how rights are relevant to everyday life. Children lead school assemblies and survey their peers to inform their next steps in their action plans clearly. The steering group have plans to consult children and parents and use this information to refresh their approaches to promoting positive behaviour. This should support the development of a school charter with clear expectations about behaviour and the contribution everyone will make to support an inclusive and respectful ethos. This planned approach should support the minority of children who are unclear about how the school helps them to understand and respect other people.
- The headteacher places a high value on children's views and improving their ability to talk about themselves as learners. Staff use daily emotional check-ins to provide support to children who require it. Teachers use the language of the wellbeing indicators in lessons to support children's understanding in this area. Children contribute relevant, age-appropriate examples to a school display board to help their peers understand more clearly how the wellbeing indicators relate to daily life. Teachers plan opportunities well for children to explore their feelings and strategies to manage these and build children's resilience. In addition, they link curriculum learning well to children's understanding of rights and equality. As a result, most children feel safe, secure and respected as part of the school community. Almost all children know who they can talk to if they are upset or have worries or concerns.
- Almost all children talk confidently about the ways the school supports them to be safe, healthy and active. They recognise the positive impact regular physical activity in the school and physical play during breaks and lunchtime have on their own health. The focus on most children contributing to pupil participation groups is helping to enhance positive relationships across the school. Children develop their communication and teamwork skills well through participation in these groups. Being a member of these groups and committees helps children take responsibility and contribute positively to the life of the school. Children at all stages play well together outdoors. Staff in the playground know children very well and provide effective support when required.

- Staff have a good understanding of their responsibilities and statutory duties related to wellbeing, equality, and inclusion. Senior leaders ensure systems and procedures are in place to meet statutory duties, which includes annual training on child protection. The headteacher monitors attendance closely across the school and overall attendance is consistently above the national average. There have been no incidents of exclusion in recent years.
- The headteacher and staff create individual plans for children who require additional support for their learning. In these plans, they record individual targets and the interventions children receive. Together with parents, they reflect on the strengths and support needs of children. Teachers work effectively with support staff to identify where they can provide group and individualised support. Support staff engage positively with professional training in new approaches to supporting children's learning. This additional support is having a positive impact on children's confidence when reading aloud to adults and their peers.
- Teachers use the school's curriculum progression frameworks to incorporate opportunities for children to learn about difference and diversity. Children in all classes receive regular religious and moral education and the school follows national guidance in relation to religious observance. Children now need to be supported further to develop their learning about diversity and their role in being a global citizen in a progressive way across the curriculum. The Rights Respecting Committee is well placed to support this work across the school. The headteacher has rightly identified the need to review the school's positive relationships policy to ensure consistent approaches to supporting behaviour across the school.
- Staff plan and support a variety of transition events and link effectively with the local nursery and secondary school. The headteacher and teachers visit children at nursery before they join P1 and use a buddy programme very well to support children's start to school. They plan a week of settling visits. As a result, children settle well and are happy and confident at school. Teachers link well with the associated secondary school to support children as they move from P7 to S1. Children have opportunities to visit the academy for academic and social events. Staff plan effectively for children who would benefit from an enhanced transition. There is strong partnership working across the ASG. Senior leaders from the local primary schools plan well a shared residential trip at P7 to support children to develop relationships prior to joining secondary school.

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

- Currently, the school has small numbers of children at each stage so each theme will be written in overall statements. In session 22/23, the school's data reports that almost all children across P1, P4 and P7 achieved expected CfE levels in numeracy and mathematics, reading, and listening and talking. In addition, the data shows that most children achieved expected levels in writing. Currently, school data is not fully reliable or robust.
- School attainment data shows high patterns of attainment in literacy and numeracy for most children over time. However, the headteacher recognises that previous teacher professional judgements were not reliable or robust. The focus on understanding clearly the national expectations about achievement of a level in literacy and numeracy is increasing teacher confidence. The headteacher should continue to ensure that school evidence supports judgements about children's attainment and progress at all levels.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Almost all children make good progress in reading and most children make good progress in talking and listening from prior levels of attainment. In writing, most children are making satisfactory progress from prior levels of attainment. Staff should now prioritise children's attainment and increased progress in writing.

Listening and talking

- Overall, most children listen well to instructions and explanations from staff and respond appropriately when working on tasks with their peers. Younger children share their ideas and opinions when working in a group with an adult. Older children identify the skills they require to deliver a range of presentations, including debates, successfully. They would benefit from applying these skills across a wider range of contexts and audiences to understand clearly the skills required for different tasks.

Reading

- Younger children use their knowledge of letters to sound out simple words. They enjoy stories and can talk about key events from a familiar text. Older children skim and scan to find information from a text. They read fluently and are developing their expression through the use of punctuation. They share their favourite genres but are not as confident in discussing preferred authors. The development of the whole school library could support them to access a wider range of texts for personal reading. Most older children discuss inference confidently and identify the clues they use within a passage to draw their conclusions.

Writing

- Younger children are learning to form letters correctly, using their knowledge of sounds to write simple words. Older children use punctuation correctly and spell familiar and unfamiliar words accurately. They would benefit from regular handwriting practice to improve the presentation of their written work. In addition, older children need to write more regularly and at length for a wider range of contexts to understand more clearly the features of different written genres. Older children are beginning to use interesting and subject specific vocabulary to enhance their writing, although this can be inconsistent.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, most children are making satisfactory progress in numeracy and mathematics. Most children demonstrate gaps in mental agility and their understanding of mathematical concepts. Across the school, almost all children would benefit from more regular opportunities to revisit taught concepts. This will help to deepen and consolidate their learning.

Number, money and measure

- Younger children engage with practical materials and use one-to-one correspondence to count to 20. They order numbers forward and backwards within the range 0-10. They share out a group of counters equally by making smaller groups. Older children identify coins and notes to £20. They identify accurately the value of each digit in a whole number and explain what a fraction is using concrete, material and pictorial representations. Children are able to recall multiples of numbers 2 to 10 however now need to increase their speed with mental agility across the four operations. Older children add two five-digit whole numbers together but are unable to subtract. Children across the school require further practice with subtraction processes to reduce dependence on pictorial strategies to solve simple calculations.

Shape, position and movement

- Younger children are developing their understanding of two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects. Across the school, children identify and describe the properties of two-dimensional shapes appropriate to their age and stage. They are less confident when describing the properties of three-dimensional objects. They identify a right angle and know that it measures 90 degrees and understand the difference between acute and obtuse angles. They accurately use words associated with directions for example, half turn and full turn. Older children confidently calculate perimeter and area using their knowledge of the properties of two-dimensional shape.

Information handling

- Younger children are developing their knowledge of simple data collection. They match and sort objects accurately through their play. Older children answer questions to extract key information from a variety of data sets including bar charts and tables. They collect, organise and display data accurately in a variety of ways.

Attainment over time

- Over the last three years, school tracking data demonstrates a varied picture in children's progress over time. The headteacher is aware that data gathered is not sufficiently reliable and robust. This means that the school's illustration of attainment over time is not as accurate as they would wish. The school should seek further opportunities for moderation to allow staff to engage rigorously with national Benchmarks and develop their understanding of them more fully.
- The headteacher should develop a strategic overview of approaches used across the school to raise attainment and address gaps in learning. This should include how staff will measure

the impact of new learning and teaching approaches and evaluate the effectiveness of interventions to improve outcomes for children.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Children are proud of their achievements both in and outwith school. Staff have a strong knowledge of children's achievements. Children and parents share achievements from home and staff take steps to ensure all children enjoy success. Staff celebrate children's achievements well in a variety of ways including through assemblies and 'Munlochy Stars'. Children enjoy a range of opportunities to achieve success within school. All children participate in pupil participation groups, including the wellbeing group and citizenship group. They voice their opinions on how to improve the school and develop key skills in teamwork, leadership, citizenship and communication. As planned, the school should now develop children's skills in leading their own and others' learning.
- Children are proud of their house groups and eager to earn house points. Staff and children are proud of their accreditations, including a recent award to acknowledge their learning about children's rights. The school is working towards an award to celebrate their work on improving the culture of reading across the school. Staff and parents provide opportunities for children to experience after school activities including robotics, coding, hockey, athletics and football input from a local professional football team. These activities support children well to develop their sporting and digital skills.

Equity for all learners

- All staff have a good understanding of the socio-economic context of their school. They understand well the hidden poverty and challenges faced by families across the community. There is currently no poverty related attainment gap within the school. All staff take steps to ensure all children participate fully in opportunities such as school trips. The headteacher has prioritised the use of PEF to support literacy and numeracy and increased staffing to improve children's literacy skills. Staff and parents help families with the cost of living by facilitating a recycled uniform bank. Staff regularly apply for funding and work with local business to subsidise school trips and activities. There are early signs that interventions and support are having a positive impact on closing attainment gaps for identified groups and cohorts.

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.