

Summarised inspection findings

Torphins Primary School

Aberdeenshire Council

7 November 2023

Key contextual information

Torphins Primary School is located in the village of Torphins within Aberdeenshire Council. At the time of inspection, the school roll was 158 children. There are seven classes in the school. Almost all children reside within Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) deciles eight to ten. There have been no exclusions in recent years. The headteacher was appointed in August 2022.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

weak

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

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

- Children in the school are confident and eager to learn. They demonstrate a willingness to be active participants in learning. The headteacher recognises that there is an important need to develop a shared understanding of high-quality learning and teaching at Torphins Primary School.
- In a few classes, children can describe and exemplify their learning and achievements. For example, children talk enthusiastically about their recent enterprise project. There are a few examples across the school where staff provide children with opportunities to participate in decision making. For example, children enjoy making suggestions about the use of the playground space. Children who take on leadership roles benefit from these additional responsibilities. There is significant scope to develop leadership skills further for all children across the school.
- In a few classes, teachers provide succinct explanations and instructions for children and establish clear routines that make best use of the teaching time available. This supports children to become more independent make improved progress in their learning. However, this is not yet consistent practice across the school.
- In a few classes, children are clear on what they are learning and what they need to do to improve. As an important next step, teachers should now ensure that all children across the school are clear about how to be successful in their learning. Teachers use verbal and written feedback effectively in a few classes to provide helpful next steps for children. However, this is not yet of a consistently high standard across the school. The headteacher should now work with staff to review approaches to formative assessment and ensure that all children are supported to know their next steps.
- When planning learning, teachers should take better account of children's differing stages of development and their learning needs. Currently, tasks and activities do not sufficiently meet the needs of all learners. Teachers should provide appropriate levels of support and challenge for all children. This would help children to make better progress in the learning. Teachers should ensure that they support children and parents to be involved more fully in their child's learning journey.

- In a few classes, children have the opportunity to engage in relevant and enjoyable learning activities. This supports them to be motivated and enthusiastic about their learning. However, too many lessons are overly teacher led and lack appropriate pace. As a result, children become disengaged and passive. Children need more opportunities to be involved in leading their own learning and to apply their learning in different contexts which are relevant and meaningful.
- Teachers at the early level are taking steps to implement a play-based approach to learning. Children enjoy the opportunities they have to learn through exploratory and investigative play. As planned, teachers should develop further their knowledge of the national practice guidance, to ensure that play pedagogy is developed further. This will provide children with more active, purposeful and progressive experiences which build successfully on their learning in nursery.
- In a few classes, children use digital technologies effectively to support their learning. Teachers use digital devices successfully in a few classes to enrich learning experiences and capture assessment information. This practice now needs to be extended across the school. Children would benefit from more opportunities to learn outdoors and in a wider range of stimulating contexts. Teachers should ensure that all children receive their entitlement to two hours of high-quality physical education each week.
- Teachers are beginning to improve their understanding of national standards by engaging with the National Benchmarks. Teachers are at the early stages of moderating children's learning with other staff across the local cluster. This is beginning to help them develop their confidence and accuracy when making professional judgements about children's learning. They now need to develop a consistent and cohesive approach to assessing children's progress and attainment.
- The headteacher has introduced a new planning for learning format that is based on Curriculum for Excellence experiences and outcomes in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Staff have refreshed their approaches to planning interdisciplinary learning and are piloting these across the school. There is now an important need to develop further approaches to planning to ensure assessment is used to plan appropriate tasks and activities delivered at the right level of difficulty for all learners. Teachers should also include evidence-based evaluations of children's progress to help inform future planning.
- Staff should review procedures for identifying, planning, delivering and measuring the impact of targeted work with children who have additional support needs. They must ensure that partner agencies, children and parents are fully involved in this process.
- The headteacher has introduced a new tracking and monitoring system. He leads tracking and attainment meetings with each teacher three times per year. The approach is not yet rigorous enough to monitor the impact of planned actions designed to raise attainment and support the progress of individuals and identified groups. Teachers need to track and clearly evidence the progress children are making, including those who require additional challenge or support. This will help staff to have a more robust understanding of progress and attainment across the school. The headteacher, working with teachers, must ensure that the progress of groups and cohorts is tracked and monitored carefully. This should include groups of children such as those who are care experienced, have additional support needs or are eligible for support through Pupil Equity Funding.

2.1 Safeguarding and child protection

- 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 that need to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

weak

This indicator focuses on the school's success in achieving the best possible outcomes for all learners. Success is measured in attainment across all areas of the curriculum and through the school's ability to demonstrate learners' achievements in relation to skills and attributes. Continuous improvement or sustained high standards over time is a key feature of this indicator. The themes are:

- attainment in literacy and numeracy
- attainment over time
- overall quality of learners' achievement
- equity for all learners

Attainment in literacy and numeracy

- Overall, across the school, children's attainment in literacy and numeracy is weak. Children at all stages, including those with additional support needs, are not making sufficient progress from their prior learning.
- The school was unable to provide robust attainment data for children across the school, including those with additional support needs. This is an important weakness within this aspect of the school's work.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, children's attainment and progress in listening and talking, reading and writing is weak. Children at all stages need to develop and apply their literacy skills more regularly and in a range of contexts across the curriculum.

Listening and talking

- Children at early level require adult support to listen and take turns. At first level, children listen effectively to others, showing interest when participating in group discussions. At second level, children need support to answer more open-ended questions. They need to develop further their higher order thinking skills. A few children across the school need support to listen to others respectfully.

Reading

- At early level, children read familiar texts aloud with accuracy. They attempt to decode unfamiliar words. Children at first and second level talk about the range of genres and authors that they enjoy both at home and in school. They explain their preferred books and are eager to have further opportunities to read for enjoyment in school. At second level, children need to read a wider a range of fiction and non-fiction texts. They need to develop their ability to summarise the main ideas within a text.

Writing

- At early level, children are developing their ability to form letters correctly. They need support to use finger spacing. They require more opportunities to build on their prior learning from nursery. At first level, children create a variety of texts for different purposes. Children at second level apply their knowledge of strategies to spell most words correctly. Children across the school need more support to write with purpose across the curriculum. A few children require more support to become independent writers.

Attainment in numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, attainment and progress in numeracy and mathematics is weak. Children across the school are capable of making much better progress. Children at early and first level have significant gaps in key aspects of their learning. They need to revisit core concepts on a more regular basis to build their confidence, recall of facts and apply their learning in a range of contexts.

Number, money and measure

- At early level, children name and use coins to 20p. They estimate amounts and add and subtract within 10. They need to develop further their ability to solve calculations involving money. They need support to link daily events to time. Children at first level add three-digit numbers and understand units of volume. They are less confident when completing calculations involving multiplication and division. They need to improve their recall of multiplication facts and to develop their ability to compare simple fractions. They require support to accurately convert units of length. At second level, children understand place value and can complete two-step problems. They identify equivalent fractions and convert simple fractions to percentages. They are less confident when multiplying a two-digit number by another two-digit number, and when completing division involving remainders. They need support to calculate profit.

Shape, position and movement

- Children at early level identify simple two-dimensional shapes and use positional language such as above and below. They need support to create patterns using shapes and to develop their knowledge of basic three-dimensional objects. At first level, children identify shapes which are symmetrical. They need to develop further their understanding of angles. Children at second level recognise three-dimensional objects and draw their associated nets. They identify different types of angles and calculate complementary angles.

Information handling

- At early level, children can interpret information from everyday formats, such as menus. They understand the purpose of signs and notices within their environment. Children at first level analyse information displayed in a range of formats and answer simple questions about the data presented. They are less confident when creating their own questions about the information shown. At second level, children use a range of presentation formats and create questions for others about the content.

Attainment over time

- Staff are not able to provide accurate information about children's progress over time or across CfE levels. They need to ensure that attainment information is based on robust assessment evidence. Teachers should engage in more moderation activities to develop further their understanding of national standards. This will improve the reliability of professional judgements about children's attainment. Staff should use the newly developed tracking system to monitor more closely the progress that individual children, specific groups and cohorts are making. This will better help them to identify gaps in learning, plan interventions to address these and more accurately identify trends in attainment over time.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Staff celebrate children's successes through displays and the school website. Pupil council members collect and share children's achievements at assemblies. Children have opportunities to develop a range of skills, such as digital literacy and decision-making, through their participation in pupil committees and activity clubs. Staff track participation and take steps to address gaps. They should now develop further opportunities for all children across the school

to take on leadership roles. Staff should support children to understand more fully the skills for learning, life and work that they are developing through these activities.

Equity for all learners

- The headteacher and staff understand their local community. They recognise the impact that the current cost of living crisis and the employment market is having on the socio-economic context of the school. The headteacher and staff have been proactive in taking steps to reduce the cost of the school day. Families can access financial assistance through the recently established 'inclusion and equity fund' which is supported by the Parent Council. Older children used the profits of their enterprise project to reduce the cost of the annual residential trip. Local charities work with the school to provide practical support for those facing economic challenges. The staff should continue to promote equity and build on the positive start made to ensuring that finance is not a barrier to participation. They should work together to ensure a collective understanding across the school community about the importance of equity.
- Staff should ensure that children who are disadvantaged by their socio-economic circumstances are included in well-planned targeted interventions and that teachers closely track their progress. This will enable them to clearly evidence the impact funded interventions have on closing the poverty related attainment gap. It will also help them to evidence the extent to which children are making accelerated progress.

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.