Summarised inspection findings

Elrick School

Aberdeenshire Council

2 July 2024

Key contextual information

Elrick Primary School is a non-denominational primary school in Westhill, Aberdeenshire. At the time of the inspection, the school roll was 389 children across 13 classes from P1 to P7, including 41 children in the nursery class. The headteacher has been in post for four years and is supported by two depute headteachers and one principal teacher, who have some class teaching commitment. In session 2020/21, there was 97.2% attendance, which was above the national average. There were no exclusions during that period. In September 2022, 98.5% of children lived within Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation deciles 8 to 10.

1.3 Leadership of change	good

This indicator focuses on collaborative leadership at all levels to develop a shared vision for change and improvement which is meaningful and relevant to the context of the school within its community. Planning for continuous improvement should be evidence-based and linked to effective self-evaluation. Senior leaders should ensure the need for change is well understood and that the pace of change is appropriate to ensure the desired positive impact for learners. The themes are:

- developing a shared vision, values and aims relevant to the school and its community
- strategic planning for continuous improvement
- implementing improvement and change

■ Senior leaders identified the need to review the school vision and values to ensure they were still relevant following the COVID-19 pandemic. They consulted all stakeholders and involved them effectively in developing the values. Staff help to embed the school values of 'kind respectful and safe' at assemblies and through learning conversations. Children receive recognition of demonstration of their values through 'clan points' and values trophies. This is all helping children to develop a good understanding of the values and what they look like in action. Children are proud of their school and can articulate the school values and vision well. The newly amended vision statement 'A happy place to learn, develop and thrive' encapsulates the senior leaders' aspirations for all children and staff. They should now ensure that the vision is clearly understood by all stakeholders.

■ The headteacher provides strong leadership. Staff and parents value her caring, friendly and open approach. She drives forward school improvement effectively. She sets a positive tone and, along with staff, has helped to create a caring and inclusive climate for learning. The headteacher is supported well by the depute headteachers and principal teacher. They have a sound understanding of children's needs and backgrounds. They have wide ranging remits which they review regularly to ensure they meet the needs of the school. Almost all staff find it rewarding to be a member of the school and staff, pupils and parents feel a strong sense of community.

■ Senior leaders have created a quality assurance calendar which outlines the ways staff will evaluate the quality of children's learning experiences. They use a wide range of approaches to gather the views of parents. This feedback helps them evaluate school improvement. Senior leaders should now involve parents and partners more fully in developing plans for continuous improvement. Senior leaders have begun to involve children in auditing aspects of school improvement. Their findings are shared with teachers and highlight aspects of positive practice as well as areas for improvement. They should ensure these are actioned and are leading to improvements in learning, teaching and assessment.

- The school improvement plan (SIP) has a clear rationale for the improvements identified. These link well with the priorities of the school and local authority. Senior leaders should ensure identified outcomes from their quality assurance and self-evaluation activities are clearly measurable. They should continue to work with staff to measure and monitor robustly the overall impact of new initiatives and changes to practice. This should help ensure that staff gain a greater understanding of the extent to which changes are leading to improved outcomes for children.

- The headteacher looks outwards to inform self-evaluation and improvement by linking with a group of headteachers within the local authority. They provide support and challenge to each other and have recently involved children in this process. As a result, the pupil council have identified improvements to their school that they plan to implement.

- Senior leaders work successfully to develop leadership at all levels, promoting collaboration. This has led to a climate of collegiality across the staff. All staff are highly committed to change and their own professional learning. Teachers and support staff undertake training, enquiry projects and additional qualifications to enhance their own skills. Teachers participate in peer visits to observe and discuss practice. Staff volunteer to take on leadership responsibilities and participate in working groups, such as to develop learning and teaching approaches and to support children's wellbeing. Senior leaders actively encourage staff to try new initiatives and share good practices. The headteacher should continue to develop a strategic overview of the range of individual teacher projects. She should ensure that these align with school improvement priorities and produce the desired outcomes.

- Senior leaders actively seek and act upon the views and opinions of children across the school. They make effective use of, How Good Is OUR School? during focus group discussions and pupil council meetings. Children have opportunities to lead change through representation in working groups, leading clubs and activities and volunteer roles. The majority of children across the school articulate confidently the ways that their views and opinions have influenced the work of the school. For example, the pupil council suggested staggered lunches which have resulted in a calmer lunchtime experience for most children. As planned, staff should continue to develop children's opportunities to reflect on and improve the work of the school. Children and staff should monitor the impact of leadership groups. This should support children to understand how these groups and focus group sessions are leading to school improvement.

- All of the school's allocation of Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) is directed towards additional staffing. This enables support staff to support learning in literacy and health and wellbeing. Senior leaders should have a clear rationale for the use of their PEF. This should be based on a robust analysis of relevant data which identifies how they plan to close the poverty-related attainment gap. They should regularly measure and track the outcomes of PEF to evidence their success towards closing this gap.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment	good

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

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

■ Across the school, children learn in a caring, supportive and nurturing atmosphere. Staff make effective use of the school's values and class charters to reinforce standards and expectations. Most children demonstrate the school values of kindness and respect well. The majority of children say that the school helps them to be more confident. Staff should continue to embed further children's rights. This should ensure all children engage in their education and decisions that affect them, so that they realise their full potential.

■ Children and adults enjoy positive and productive relationships almost all of the time. Almost all children engage well in their learning and support each other during tasks. They are motivated to learn. Staff are effective in promoting positive behaviour. Teachers encourage children and model positive reinforcement. This helps children to understand expectations. A few children use designated spaces adjacent to their classrooms for short periods of time. This is beneficial to their wellbeing and learning. A few children get very effective one-to-one support from adults in these learning spaces to ensure they are included and engaged in their learning. Staff put their professional learning on promoting positive relationships to good effect. They are implementing approaches to resolving relationship difficulties through conversation and reflection. This is improving how well children are engaging with their learning almost all of the time.

■ Children engage very well with teachers' use of relevant and meaningful contexts for learning. To achieve this, teachers have increased their range of learning and teaching approaches. Children learn progressively in the outdoors and for science, technology, engineering and mathematics. As a result, children are becoming more aware of the skills they are developing and how these support their future learning, life and work.

■ Across the school, teachers use digital technologies well to enhance learning and teaching. Children use digital devices confidently to play games to reinforce learning, make short films, undertake research and for word processing. Teachers are in the process of re-establishing an online platform to share examples of children's work with their parents. They should ensure that children's next steps in learning are clarified further with them and their parents.

■ Staff's approaches to quality play are improving. Almost all children in P1 and P2 lead their play in a range of contexts. At times, children follow their interests for a sustained period of time. Children as they play are creative, curious and solve problems. They share resources and learn to socialise and negotiate. As a next step, teachers should plan play approaches across the curriculum. This should involve regular planned opportunities for children to develop and extend their literacy and numeracy skills. Teachers would benefit from increasing their role in play to ensure that children receive more regular interactions, commentary and questions.

- Almost all teachers' explanations are clear. At times, a few teachers over-direct learning when children are capable of leading and applying their learning more independently. Children work effectively in pairs and in groups, when given the opportunity. There is scope for teachers to provide more opportunities for children to work in this way.

- Most learning is appropriately matched to children's abilities. Teachers' accurate use of data has improved the consistency of appropriately challenging activities for a few more able children. This is impacting positively on the progress children are making. Pupil support assistants use a variety of approaches and strategies to support children with barriers to learning effectively. Teachers should set higher expectations of what children can achieve and ensure all learning activities are suitably paced, appropriately differentiated and offer sufficient challenge. Teachers should ensure timely transitions between activities.

- Across stages, almost all teachers make effective use of questioning to check for understanding and support learning. In a majority of lessons, teachers extend questioning techniques to support and challenge children's thinking.

- Most teachers share clear learning aims and how children will be successful. Teachers should continue to clarify explicitly what children will learn. On a few occasions, teachers co-construct success criteria with children. Children should be supported to develop further as reflective learners. They should be involved more consistently in identifying quality next steps in all areas of their learning. Teachers need to provide children with quality feedback on their work to support them in identifying their own targets.

- Senior leaders introduced a useful draft assessment calendar to coordinate the timing of summative assessments across the school. Teachers plan a range of assessments in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. These support well teachers' professional judgements on children's attainment and progress. The majority of children engage regularly in peer- and self-assessment. As planned, teachers should plan high-quality assessments to allow children the opportunity to demonstrate and apply their skills in literacy and numeracy across the curriculum. Teachers plan regular opportunities for children to discuss their writing. These talking activities could be considered as key assessments to support children's progress and attainment in literacy and English. This would increase the pace in gathering quality evidence.

- All teachers work well together to engage in a few moderation activities within and beyond the school. Their moderation activities have a focus on the children's progress in listening, talking and writing. As a result, teachers are more confident in confirming achievement of a level in these areas. Teachers should continue to increase moderation activities to include all curricular areas. Teachers should work closely with staff at the secondary stages to support continuity in Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) third level.

- Teachers create an annual overview of key learning, which is then planned in more detail on a termly and weekly basis. This builds on children's prior knowledge and skills using progression frameworks. Support for learning teachers plan well to meet the needs of children who require additional support with their learning. A few teachers make effective use of visual planning displays in classrooms. Children contribute to planning learning that links across different subjects. Going forward, teachers' plans should include much greater detail on how they meet the needs of different groups and individuals within their class. Senior leaders should support teachers to use the design principles when planning. This should improve the delivery of learning, teaching and assessment.

- Senior leaders and teachers monitor and track children's progress and attainment in literacy, numeracy, and health and wellbeing across CfE levels. Staff use this data with increasing

confidence to support their termly discussions with senior leaders about the progress of children. All children who are supported with interventions have their progress checked. A minority of teachers need to focus on raising and sustaining patterns of improvements in attainment. They should assess children's progress across the curriculum to plan future learning at the right level of difficulty.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

■ The curriculum rationale was recently reviewed in consultation with staff, children, parents and partners. The refreshed curriculum rationale now better reflects the unique context of the school and the use of local partnerships to enhance learning pathways. As planned, senior leaders should now ensure teachers use the rationale to reflect on their practice.

■ Teachers use a range of pathways linked to the experiences and outcomes of CfE and national Benchmarks to plan children's learning. Teachers worked together to create an outdoor learning skills progression framework. This is helping teachers to plan progressive learning opportunities for children outdoors. Staff bundle experiences and outcomes on a three-year cycle to cover a range of curriculum areas. Teachers should continue to ensure that learning pathways support children to build continually on their knowledge and skills for learning, life and work.

■ Children experience science, technology, engineering, expressive arts and mathematics (STEAM) subjects within discrete lessons and when learning across different subjects. Staff work well with a range of local partners to further enhance their work in this area. Through this children are increasing their knowledge of the world of work. Teachers plan well learning in music and drama to support popular whole school events. These include musical concerts, participation in 'Glee' competitions, the school choir and a P7 end of year show.

■ All children learn French progressively from P1 to P7. Across the school, children also experience a range of other languages such as Spanish, Mandarin and British Sign Language. As part of the local context, teachers could consider the role of Doric within the learning pathways. Children receive two hours of high-quality learning in physical education each week.

■ Children benefit from class libraries and a well-stocked school library which provide a range of fiction and non-fiction books. Staff should continue to promote the use of the library to develop a culture of reading for enjoyment.

■ Teachers work effectively with colleagues to support children well as they come to school from early years settings or move on to secondary school. P6 children meet and play with nursery children before transition into P1. This supports children well to settle into school. At P1, there is a well-established transition programme in place that is supportive and helpful for children and parents. Across the school, teachers share relevant information about children's attainment, wellbeing and individual needs as they move from one stage to the next.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

■ Staff have surveyed parents to seek their views on the school's vision, values and aims. They used this information well to ensure a shared understanding of expectations across the school community. The majority of parents value staff support for their child's education. They appreciate the school's caring and welcoming ethos. Almost all parents state that staff know their child as an individual.

■ Most parents feel comfortable approaching the school with questions, suggestions and concerns and a majority feel that their views will be taken into account. Senior leaders use a range of different approaches to seek the views of parents. They should continue to ensure that parents are fully aware of how their views have been considered and influenced any change.

■ Teachers communicate general information about learning through termly class newsletters. They are at the early stages of introducing a new digital platform to share children's individual learning journeys. Parents are encouraged to provide feedback on this new approach. Parents appreciate regular open-day sessions, such as "meet the teacher" and "conversation cafes". These enable them to have regular face to face communication with staff.

■ The Parent Council works well in partnership with senior leaders to support the work of the school. Most parents feel encouraged to be involved in the work of the Parent Council and say the Parent Council keep them fully informed of their work.

2.1 Safeguarding

■ The school submitted self-evaluation information related to child protection and safeguarding. Inspectors discussed this information with relevant staff and, where appropriate, children. In addition, inspectors examined a sample of safeguarding documentation. Areas for development have been agreed with the school and the education authority.

3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion	very good

This indicator focuses on the impact of the school's approach to wellbeing which underpins children and young people's ability to achieve success. It highlights the need for policies and practices to be well grounded in current legislation and a shared understanding of the value of every individual. A clear focus on ensuring wellbeing entitlements and protected characteristics supports all learners to maximise their successes and achievements. The themes are:

- wellbeing
- fulfilment of statutory duties
- inclusion and equality

■ Staff ensure children, positive relationships and the wellbeing of children, staff and families are the foundation of the school ethos. All stakeholder groups value the care demonstrated by staff towards children and the quality of relationships across the school and ELC are an important strength. Staff demonstrate a high level of commitment to the nurturing and restorative approaches being developed in the school. Partners also express a significant degree of support for these approaches that prioritise the rights and wellbeing of children. The headteacher and staff acknowledge they need to continue to support parents to fully understand and appreciate the value of these approaches in supporting children's learning. Senior leaders should ensure staff and stakeholders have a clear understanding of how different approaches being implemented are supporting children's wellbeing.

■ Relationships between staff and children are strong across the school and most children demonstrate care and concern for each other. Most children also display a good understanding of the school values and enjoy earning 'clan points' when they demonstrate these values. However, children report a few occasions when the behaviour of individuals gives them cause for concern. Staff report a few occasions where children are disrespectful. Staff employ well-considered approaches to support the regulation of behaviour. Their interventions to reduce disruptive behaviour, such as restorative approaches, are impacting positively on the ability of almost all children to manage their behaviour. These measures are helping to reduce further the small number of occasions where children display dysregulated behaviour.

■ Staff understand the needs of children very well and monitor regularly and robustly how well these needs are met. Staff and partners respond to these needs in an appropriate range of sensitive and flexible ways. Most children feel they have someone they can talk to regularly if they are worried or concerned about something. In school and in the playground, children at all stages demonstrate an understanding of risk and manage it effectively. Most children are happy in school and benefit from physical activity through clubs and '15-minute fitness' sessions during the weekly 'Wellbeing Wednesdays'. Most parents agree that the school supports their child's emotional wellbeing and helps their child to feel confident.

■ Staff have developed very effective partnership working with other agencies and specialists which result in positive outcomes for children. Children's wellbeing and learning needs are well met as a result. Partners include, for example, healthcare professionals, the Nature Nurture service, Befriend a Child and speech and language therapists.

■ Children benefit from participating in and leading a range of clubs and activities at lunchtime and after school. Through roles such as 'health heroes', the pupil council and other groups, children feel empowered to make suggestions and bring about change to improve their school. Children who participate in these roles talk about the impact their work has on the school and in developing their own skills and confidence. For example, the 'health heroes' conduct and

analyse a regular whole school wellbeing audit to identify areas for improvement and then suggest ways to take these forwards.

- Senior leaders have a detailed understanding of their statutory duties, and all staff are clear about their professional responsibilities in relation to current legislation and national guidance. They assess the needs of children well and consider the use of child's plans for children who are care-experienced, using them when appropriate. Most children who have additional needs make good progress in their learning as a result of effective partnership working and interventions from staff.

- Staff use thorough and robust systems to monitor the attendance of all children. Staff and partners are taking effective steps to improve the attendance of a few identified children and continue to work to improve the attendance of a few others. Those children who improve their attendance are improving their progress in learning as a result.

- All staff demonstrate a clear understanding of children's rights. Across the school, staff use wellbeing indicators effectively with all children to evaluate their wellbeing and inform appropriate interventions. This is supporting children to develop a common language to discuss issues of and reflect on their own wellbeing. Children benefit from appropriate targeted interventions to help them improve their health and engage in their learning better as a result. Senior leaders and staff should continue to develop ways in which children can demonstrate improvements in their health and wellbeing over time. This could, for example, include the use of personal targets for all children which they agree and help to evaluate.

- Children talk confidently about the importance of healthy eating, exercise and emotional wellbeing and most participate eagerly in clubs and activities at lunchtimes and after school. Staff continue to help children develop their understanding of protected characteristics. Staff are also helping children to develop their understanding of factors, such as neurodiversity. They are also extending their understanding of diversity through religious education. Senior leaders and staff should explore ways in which they can develop their assembly and wellbeing programmes to include a wider variety of faith representatives. This will support children to recognise diversity and develop respect for others in the local community.

- Most children with additional support needs are making good progress in their learning. This includes children who are care-experienced. Staff work effectively with a number of partners to promote equality and diversity and promote a culture where rights are respected. Senior leaders should ensure that programmes that help children explore their rights and protected characteristics prioritise meeting the needs of children in the school.

3.2 Raising attainment and achievement	good

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

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

Attainment in literacy and numeracy

■ Across the school, most children achieve national standards in literacy and numeracy. A few children at every stage are exceeding national expectations in literacy and numeracy. Most children who require additional support with their learning make good progress towards individual targets.

Attainment in literacy and English

■ At early and second levels, most children are making good progress in literacy and English. At first level, the majority of children are making good progress. A few children are making very good progress. A few children could be making better progress.

Listening and talking

■ Across all stages, most children are articulate and use an extensive range of vocabulary. At early and first levels, a majority of children listen respectfully to others in conversation. Almost all express their opinions in detail. By second level, most children listen well, respond appropriately and make timely contributions to conversations. Children clarify well the differences between fact and opinion. Children's independent skills in small group discussions and debating should be developed further.

Reading

■ At early level, most children use their knowledge of sounds, letters and patterns to read words and sentences. At first and second levels, most children read aloud with confidence and are able to use expression to support understanding of a text. A few children should be encouraged to use more reading strategies to improve their fluency and expression in reading. Most children describe in detail their favourite authors and give reasons for their choice. They answer well literal and evaluative questions. A few children would benefit from analysing and evaluating more complex texts and giving their own ideas about the writer's messages and themes.

Writing

■ Across all stages, teachers need to prioritise the improvement of children's structured writing. At early level, most children write a simple sentence. They leave a space between words when writing and write from left to right. A few children write independently in their play. A few children at early level were writing beyond and using connectives in their writing. As children move through the school, they do not sustain progress in writing well enough. At first level, the majority of children are using paragraphs and punctuation appropriately. Children would benefit from writing more regularly, in more detail and across a wider range of contexts. At second level, most children write clearly for different purposes. Their motivation for writing has increased. Across all stages, children should set higher expectations for their handwriting,

presentation of work and spelling. This could be usefully incorporated into daily conversations with children on how they will be successful in their learning.

Numeracy and mathematics

■ Overall, most children are making good progress in numeracy and mathematics. A few children are making very good progress.

Number, money and measure

■ At early level, most children identify the number before and after to 20 and some beyond. Most children add and subtract within 10 and a few with support to 20. At early level, children need more support to link daily routines to time sequences. At first level, most children successfully round numbers to the nearest 100. They accurately compare size of fractions. They require more practise multiplying and dividing. At second level, most children confidently complete three-digit addition and subtraction calculations. They confidently make the link between fractions, decimals and percentages. Children at second level would benefit from using numeracy skills in a wider range of contexts.

Shape, position and movement

■ At early level, most children recognise and describe common two-dimensional (2D) shapes and three-dimensional (3D) objects. They are less confident using positional language. At first level, most children name common 3D objects but are not yet able to describe their properties with confidence. Most children identify symmetry in patterns and pictures but need to consolidate their understanding of right angles. At second level, most children can successfully name a range of angles.

Information handling

■ Overall, most children have good understanding of information handling relative to their stage. At early level, most children answer questions about simple graphs. At first and second levels, most children extract key information from a variety of data sets including charts, bar graphs and tables. At second level, children have a developing understanding of chance and probability.

Attainment over time

■ Senior leaders track and monitor the progress and attainment of cohorts of children over time. They recognise that children's attainment over time dips at the beginning of first level and improves again as children move through the school. They have rightly created a raising attainment strategy and taken steps to improve attainment, for example introducing new approaches to teaching writing and mental maths. These approaches are beginning to support improvements in children's attainment. There remains scope to raise attainment by ensuring that levels of attainment do not dip and remain consistently high as children move through the school.

■ Senior leaders meet with teachers three times a year to discuss progress of children who have been identified as requiring support or challenge. As a result of those meetings, children who require support with their learning receive targeted interventions. Children who are exceeding expectations benefit from working in challenge groups for numeracy. Senior leaders should now ensure attainment over time is more robustly reviewed with teachers to identify children who could be making better progress. This will help staff to accelerate further progress for identified groups. As planned, senior leaders should now develop approaches to gathering information on children's progress across all areas of the curriculum.

- Senior leaders monitor attendance regularly and follow local authority procedures to ensure appropriate follow up action. Senior leaders should continue to monitor the impact of approaches to support improved attendance for a few children.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Children's achievements within and outwith the school are celebrated in a variety of ways, including through awards given at assemblies, in class achievement displays and school wall displays. Children participate enthusiastically in musical, sporting and other events beyond the school. As a result, children are developing performance skills, confidence and sportsmanship.

- Children are developing skills in a range of contexts, for example as members of the pupil council, as 'health heroes', eco team members and as digital leaders. Digital leaders support the development of younger children's digital literacy skills. Older children have buddying roles and lead clubs for younger children, for example in badminton, play and French. Almost all P6 and P7 children participate in volunteering duties within school. These activities support children well to develop responsibility, decision making, teamwork and leadership skills. Senior leaders are proactive in ensuring children who do not yet participate in activities are given the opportunities to do so. Children are enthusiastic about their achievements but are not yet able to discuss the skills they are developing through these activities and roles. As a next step, staff should support children to make a link between the range of their achievements and development of skills for learning, life and work.

Equity for all learners

- Staff are aware of the socio-economic context of children and families. Senior leaders and staff are mindful of the cost of the school day. Staff lead lunchtime clubs for targeted children to provide equity of opportunity and signpost financial support for parents.

- A minority of children who are impacted negatively by their socio-economic circumstances are on track to achieve national expectations of attainment in literacy and the majority in numeracy. PEF is currently used to provide universal and targeted interventions to support wellbeing and communication skills. Senior leaders should now carefully track and evidence the impact of funded interventions on identified children's attainment. This will provide data to better inform strategic decisions about PEF and help identify ways to accelerate progress in closing poverty related attainment gaps.

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.