

Summarised inspection findings

Ardersier Primary School

The Highland Council

23 January 2024

Key contextual information

Ardersier Primary School is a non-denominational primary school serving Ardersier village, near Nairn. The school roll is 113 children across six classes. The majority of children live in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) data zones four to six.

The leadership team comprises a headteacher and an acting principal teacher. The headteacher has been in post since March 2020. There has been a considerable change in staffing over the past year.

Ardersier nursery class was inspected by the Care Inspectorate within the past 18 months, therefore, the local authority and headteacher had the option to include the nursery class as part of this inspection. We have agreed with the local authority and school that the nursery class is not part of this inspection. The findings set out below are for the primary school stages.

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

- The headteacher and staff have worked together to promote an ethos that is caring and inclusive. Staff place a high priority on children's wellbeing, in line with the school's vision, values and aims. Teachers use the values to promote positive relationships. Most children are polite, compassionate and respectful to each other. The majority of children are eager to participate in learning and interact well during activities.
- Overall, the quality of teaching across the school is not yet consistent or of a sufficiently high quality for all children. In a few lessons, explanations and instructions for children are clear, enabling children to understand the purpose of their learning. Teachers need now to share learning intentions and measures of success across all lessons. This will support children further to recognise success in their learning.
- In a few lessons, teachers provide learning activities at different levels. These are not yet of a high enough quality to meet the needs of all children consistently well. Teachers should increase the pace of learning and ensure all children experience an appropriate level of challenge. Children respond well to opportunities they have to work in pairs and groups. They are now ready to have a greater role in leading their own learning. Children would benefit from having greater opportunities to influence what and how they are learning.
- In a few lessons, teachers use open questioning techniques to check children's knowledge. Teachers should employ a wide range of questioning techniques to deepen children's thinking skills and evaluate their understanding. Teachers need to have high expectations of what children can achieve by setting challenging and open-ended activities. These activities should stimulate children's creativity, curiosity and problem-solving skills while learning in classrooms

and beyond. Teachers should now make better use of a wider range of contexts and outdoor spaces, such as the outdoor classroom, to promote motivating learning experiences.

- A few teachers provide a range of written and verbal feedback to children about their work. This feedback is not yet of a consistent standard to help children know what they have done well or how to improve. Teachers should now work collaboratively to develop robust approaches to providing children with high-quality feedback. This will help ensure that children understand the progress they are making and their next steps in learning. Children's improved attainment would be supported by a clearer understanding of their targets in literacy and numeracy.
- In a few classes, staff have introduced play-based learning approaches to support learning across the curriculum. This is at an early stage of development. To support this further, staff should engage with national guidance to develop the quality of experiences, spaces and interactions. There is a need to strengthen staff's understanding of the role of the adult in the learning environment. Teachers should ensure all children's play experiences are developmentally appropriate, reflecting the appropriate benchmarks and curriculum levels for children's age and stage, particularly in literacy and numeracy.
- The headteacher has begun to work with staff to explore the features of effective learning and teaching. They should now agree a shared understanding of what highly effective learning and teaching looks like at Ardersier Primary School. Teachers would benefit from opportunities for peer observations and visits to other schools. This can provide a helpful basis for professional dialogue to support teachers to develop their professional practice.
- Teachers use local authority curriculum pathways to support planning for literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Teachers highlight Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) experiences and outcomes to record planned learning. However, they are not yet ensuring that children's learning is progressive and builds on prior learning across all areas of the curriculum effectively. To support the development of more effective practice in this regard, teachers would benefit from opportunities to plan with stage partners. The headteacher and teachers should continue to develop and review their approaches to planning to evaluate the impact on children's progress. Teachers should ensure all learning time is used purposefully to support children's progress, achievement and attainment.
- Teachers use a range of formative and summative assessment approaches to evaluate children's learning in literacy and numeracy. Teachers use evidence from standardised assessments, such as Scottish National Standardised Assessments, to support their professional judgement on achievement of CfE levels. Teachers should develop further their use of assessment to support overall judgements of children's progress. Teachers participated last year in moderation of writing within the school. Teachers would benefit from engaging more closely with national benchmarks and taking part in moderation activity with colleagues from other schools. This will help to ensure professional judgements are reliable and contribute to plans to raise attainment.
- The headteacher has developed and implemented an effective and proportionate approach to tracking and monitoring children's progress in literacy and numeracy. Teachers participate in termly planning and attainment meetings with the headteacher. They discuss individual children's progress and agree on interventions. This is beginning to help staff to identify when children are not reaching the expected levels of attainment and take action. The headteacher and teachers should continue to monitor how well planning, teaching and learning approaches are supporting strategies to raise children's attainment.

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

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

- The school submitted attainment data based on teachers' professional judgement. Whilst teachers are developing a better shared understanding of standards, attainment data submitted by the school is not yet fully accurate. The inspection team identified that overall, the majority of children are achieving expected levels in numeracy and mathematics and in literacy and English. A minority of children are capable of greater progress. Children who require support with their learning are making satisfactory progress from prior levels of attainment.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, a majority of children are making satisfactory progress in literacy and English.

Listening and talking

- Across the school, the majority of children listen well. However, a minority of children require support to take turns and listen to the ideas and opinions of others. Children who have achieved early level are developing talking and listening skills through play opportunities. They enjoy listening to stories and can share their likes and dislikes. Children who have achieved first level ask and respond to different types of questions. They discuss differences between fact and opinion. The majority of children who are on track to achieve second level, discuss a text and listen to other viewpoints. They would benefit from opportunities to speak to a wider range of audiences.

Reading

- At early level, most children are developing their knowledge of sounds and letters through play-based pedagogy. Children who have achieved early level hear and say patterns and rhyme. Children who have achieved first level read fluently and are able to discuss preferences for authors. They summarise and make predictions about texts. Children who are on track to achieve second level answer a range of literal and evaluative questions about texts. Across the school, children would benefit from the development of a culture of reading for enjoyment. This will help support strategies to further develop children's reading skills.

Writing

- Overall, children should be given more opportunities to write for a range of purposes including linked to real-life contexts. Across the school, children should be supported to improve the presentation of written work. Teachers need to adopt a whole school approach to support children in presenting their writing more clearly and legibly.
- At early level, most children explore writing through play-based opportunities. The majority of children who have achieved early level form most lower-case letters legibly and write simple sentences using punctuation with support. They now need more opportunities to develop pencil control through planned writing opportunities. The majority of children who have achieved first

level identify and use verbs, nouns and connectives in their writing. They are less confident in using descriptive language. Most children working towards second level write letters and persuasive texts. At first and second level, children need more opportunities to write extended pieces of independent writing across a range of genres. They would benefit from creating individualised writing targets. This will help to support continued improvement in children's attainment in writing.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, the majority of children are making satisfactory progress in numeracy and mathematics. Across the school, children now need further experience in applying their skills in a wider range of meaningful contexts across the curriculum.

Number, money and measure

- Children who have achieved early level count within 20. They add and subtract mentally within ten and a few of them within 20. They need more practise recognising a range of coins. Children who have achieved first level round numbers to the nearest hundred and can place numbers within a sequence. They link a digit with its place and value. Most children on track to achieve second level are secure in their understanding of place value to two decimal places. They understand the relationship between fractions, decimals and percentages. Across all levels, children would benefit from revisiting learning more regularly to consolidate concepts within number and number processes.

Shape, position and movement

- Children who have achieved early level identify, recognise and sort common two-dimensional shapes. The majority of children who have achieved first level, are confident in describing the properties of two-dimensional shapes and a few three-dimensional objects. Children on track to achieve second level, describe the properties of three-dimensional objects. Further opportunities to explore three-dimensional objects and two-dimensional shapes will develop children's confidence in the use of specific vocabulary including radius, diameter and circumference.

Information handling

- Children at early level use their skills in sorting and counting to interpret simple charts. They use their knowledge of shape, colour and size to sort a group of objects. Children who have achieved first level interpret a bar graph and answer questions about the information presented. They should continue to develop skills in presenting data in a range of charts and graphs. Children on track to achieve second level are learning a range of ways to collect, organise and display data, and are using digital technology to support this.

Attainment over time

- Attainment of individual children and groups of children were impacted by periods of changing in staffing in recent years. Children's progress in literacy and numeracy is now improving as a result of staff implementing a range of universal and targeted strategies. The majority of children are now on track to achieve appropriate CfE levels in literacy and numeracy. Teachers should continue to monitor children's progress towards individual targets in literacy and numeracy to ensure all children make as much progress as they can.
- Children's attendance is in line with the national average. The headteacher monitors the attendance of all children on a monthly basis and ensures appropriate follow-up action for children whose attendance is low. This is helping to ensure attendance levels are improving.

Overall quality of learner's achievements

- Children have opportunities to share and celebrate personal achievements within and outwith school in a variety of ways. For example, children's achievements are celebrated through

school newsletters, at school assemblies and through Our Wider Learning Success (O.W.Ls) displays. Children receive individual and class awards, which help to motivate children to further achievements.

- Children from P1 to P7 enjoy developing leadership skills through roles in the pupil council, eco committee, as House Captains and Vice Captains. Children are able to discuss the skills they are developing as a result of these roles, such as improved decision making.
- Children in P7 benefit from participation in a leadership programme. This is supporting the development of skills such as resilience. As planned, children should now be supported to identify and profile the skills for learning, life and work they develop through wider achievements.

Equity for all learners

- The headteacher and all staff have a strong understanding of the barriers faced by children in the school, including those caused by socio-economic pressures. The headteacher and all staff are mindful of the cost of the school day. They provide support to children and families in a variety of ways, for example, through access to pre-loved uniform and other bespoke forms of support.
- The headteacher consults the Parent Council on the focus of Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) spend. The headteacher has identified use of the majority of PEF to improve attendance, inclusion, engagement and attainment. Additional staffing has been used to provide targeted support in nurture and health and wellbeing for groups of children. As a result, children are more motivated and engaged in their learning.
- Targeted interventions to support closing literacy and numeracy gaps are planned but have not yet been implemented. These interventions should be implemented as soon as possible. The headteacher and staff should track the effectiveness of all funded interventions in order to evidence accelerated progress in raising attainment.

Other relevant evidence

- Children across the school learn French. Children are not yet receiving their full entitlement to a 1+2 approach to modern languages.
- Children receive their entitlement to two hours high-quality physical education per week.

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.