

# Summarised inspection findings

**Heathryburn Primary School**

Aberdeen City Council

28 November 2023

## Key contextual information

Heathryburn Primary School and Nursery Class is situated in Northfield, Aberdeen. The headteacher took up post in 2020. She is supported by a senior leadership team comprising of a substantive depute headteacher, a fixed-term depute headteacher, and two acting principal teachers. The substantive depute headteacher leads the nursery alongside a substantive senior early years practitioner and an acting senior early years practitioner. There was significant change in the senior leadership team before and since the headteacher took up post.

At the time of the inspection, there were 317 children, organised into 13 classes. Almost all children live in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) data zones 1 to 4. In February 2022, 75% of children were registered for free school meals. At the time of the inspection, the school reported 50% of children had additional support needs.

Attendance is generally below the national average and reduced further during and since the COVID-19 pandemic.

### 1.3 Leadership of change

**satisfactory**

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

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

- The headteacher's leadership of the primary school provides much needed stability and direction following recent periods of significant challenge. Her vision for improvement and supportive approach means she is well respected by staff, children, parents and partners across the school community. The headteacher and her senior leadership team have focused appropriately on improving the school ethos to ensure all children feel nurtured and included. They have also improved the quality of personalised support for children who require additional support with their wellbeing or learning. This has led to positive improvements in the school ethos, as well as children's behaviour and engagement with learning.
- The headteacher has directed change purposefully in the primary school over recent years. Positively, the school community recognises that this was required to drive much needed improvements. Senior leaders have developed useful policies and practice to support staff to improve the learning environment. This has mainly focused on supporting children to feel able and motivated to learn. Senior leaders and staff now need to embed these changes fully and focus on the key priorities to drive further improvement. Senior leaders and staff recognise the significant need to improve the consistency and quality of teaching and learner experiences. They need to increase the pace of improvements to raise the attainment and achievement of all children.
- Senior leaders undertook an extensive review of the school's vision, values and aims to ensure they were relevant to the school's context. They worked very well in partnership with staff, parents and children to do this. Staff created a shared vision, abbreviated to 'learning is life

changing', and incorporated the REACH values of respect, empathy, acceptance, challenge and happiness. Children are developing their understanding of the relevance of these values to their learning and life. Senior leaders and staff support children to explore the values frequently and meaningfully during assemblies and in class. Through the recently introduced house system, children are awarded points for demonstrating the values in action. This is leading to almost all children demonstrating the school values well.

- The headteacher and senior leaders now need to provide clearer leadership and direction to improve the quality of play-based learning across the early level. There is a need to continue to improve the learning environment to enable children to experience learning that promotes creativity, curiosity and investigative play.
- Senior leaders have effective processes in place to support quality assurance with regular self-evaluation activities in the primary school. They gather useful information from sampling children's work, lesson observations and questionnaires. They meet with teachers to review children's progress in learning. Senior leaders, working with the wider staff, use *How good is our school?* 4<sup>th</sup> edition well to evaluate the work of the school. They analyse information and use it to direct school improvement. The headteacher should now streamline the primary school improvement plan to focus on the key drivers of change. Senior leaders should systematically identify clear and measurable outcomes sought from improvement priorities at the early stages of planning. This will help staff to evaluate the work of the school. There is also a need to involve parents, children and partners in planning and evaluating school improvement more regularly.
- Staff participate in well-planned professional learning opportunities, provided by senior leaders, partners and national organisations. Most apply the knowledge gained well to support children's wellbeing and aspects of their learning. Senior leaders are also developing the use of staff leadership groups to empower all staff to lead aspects of school improvement. All staff should now increase their leadership role in improving the quality and consistency of learning and teaching and raising the attainment of children.
- A minority of teachers have worked collaboratively with researchers from a local university to develop their practice and pedagogy. This has led to improvements in practice, such as how staff support children's experiential writing. Senior leaders should continue to develop this approach to involve more staff in professional enquiry.
- Senior leaders support all staff to engage meaningfully with annual professional reviews. They respond positively to staff's professional interests and support them to undertake development priorities linked to these areas. Staff professional reviews and development plans could be more clearly linked to school improvement priorities. Staff development plans should capture better how all staff develop leadership skills and capacities.
- Children are proud of their school and eager to contribute their ideas to help it improve, such as through pupil surveys. Children have worked with the Parent Council to identify new equipment to support positive play between children during breaks. A minority of children, however, state they do not always know how their ideas are taken into account. Senior leaders should continue to develop how they communicate with children to help them understand how they influence change. A minority of children have leadership opportunities across school life. These include house and class captains, REACH ambassadors and library monitors. They role model positive leadership skills to younger peers. Staff should develop further opportunities for more children to be involved in leadership roles across the school.

## 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

- Heathryburn Primary School has a positive and respectful ethos. This is underpinned by the well-considered and shared school values. Children are friendly, welcoming and regularly demonstrate the school values in action. All staff interactions with children are warm, caring and nurturing. Most children feel that staff treat them fairly and with respect. A majority of children feel that they are respected by their peers.
- Most children are motivated and eager to engage in their learning. Teachers and support staff help most children to work independently successfully, in pairs and in groups. Children are encouraged to support each other where appropriate.
- Most children learn across a range of environments which motivate them, both indoors and outdoors. Classroom displays are engaging and well-presented. In a few lessons, children use displays effectively to support their learning. Children are proud to have their achievements displayed and shared regularly.
- Children in the early years are not yet benefiting from high quality play-based learning. Senior leaders, staff and the local authority now need to work together to address this. They should plan carefully the use of appropriate spaces, resources and learning through play. They should seek further opportunities to work with early years colleagues outwith the school to support children's learning through play. Staff should re-engage with national guidance and professional learning. This will develop further their understanding of the close relationship between play and the role of the adult.
- Almost all teachers use digital technology well to support children's learning, such as the interactive whiteboards. Children use laptops and tablet computers confidently to take photographs, play games to reinforce learning, undertake research and for word processing. Teachers should plan more consistently using the school's digital skills progression framework. This will support them to offer more creative learning opportunities and help to develop children's skills progressively at all stages.
- Senior leaders and staff developed a 'Learning, Teaching and Assessment Standard' to support consistent high-quality practice across the school. The standard clearly indicates expectations regarding high-quality learning and teaching. This is not yet being used by staff to inform their practice. Senior leaders and staff should review and streamline this standard and ensure it is applied consistently across the school to support teachers to improve their practice.
- Staff have introduced new approaches to the teaching of reading. This involves several children learning in different stage classes for this aspect of learning. Senior leaders should consider the effectiveness of this approach in supporting and meeting the needs of all learners.

- In almost all classes, teachers provide clear explanations and instructions. Most teachers use questioning well to engage whole classes and groups, and to check children's understanding. However, teachers use closed questions too often, which does not encourage children to think deeply about their learning. Children would benefit from questioning that challenges their higher order thinking skills further.
- In almost all lessons, teachers should improve the pace and challenge of learning. Children require further opportunities to lead their learning and think for themselves. They would benefit from having a greater understanding of their individual progress. Children should be involved in drafting and tracking their own learning targets more routinely.
- Learning focuses on the completion of tasks too often, rather than the process of learning. Most children do not understand the purpose of learning. They also cannot routinely explain what success in their learning looks like. In a minority of lessons, teachers use oral feedback positively to support children in their learning. In many of these lessons, teachers also use self and peer assessment and written feedback effectively to support children's next steps in learning. A few teachers use plenary sessions effectively to check children's understanding. They support children to make links between what they are learning. All teachers should work together to develop more consistent approaches to the use of formative assessment strategies. This will support children to make the best possible progress.
- Senior leaders have developed a clear overview of summative assessments across all stages. Teachers use this to plan a range of summative and standardised assessments for literacy and numeracy. They record assessment information regularly. Teachers use records to review children's progress and to plan appropriate interventions.
- Teachers moderate children's work regularly. They do this well in collaboration with stage partners and senior leaders. A next step would be to plan moderation with external colleagues, specifically those across the learning community. This would support teachers' collection of robust evidence of children's progress in learning.
- All teachers plan learning over the long, medium, and short term. This planning needs to take greater account of the different levels of challenge required to meet all children's needs effectively. Senior leaders recognise that children should have a greater voice in planning and leading their learning. Senior leaders meet termly to discuss how effectively teacher's plans meet the needs of all children. These meetings are not yet resulting in an effective approach to planning children's learning across the curriculum. Senior leaders need to monitor planning more frequently. This will support teachers to demonstrate how they provide children with all of their curriculum entitlements.
- Senior leaders and teachers monitor and track the progress and attainment of children well. They use the tracking system effectively to record levels of attainment and predict how well children will progress. They meet termly to review information and ensure children are attaining and achieving as well as possible. Teachers identify children who require additional support and interventions are put in place to support their learning. These interventions are monitored well to determine if they are improving outcomes.

## 2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- Staff prioritised literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing learning for children during and following the COVID-19 pandemic. Staff are now re-establishing learning experiences across the curriculum. They should continue this work to ensure all children receive their full curriculum entitlements. Senior leaders and staff carefully consider the context of the school and community when designing the curriculum. Teachers have well-considered progression pathways for all curriculum areas. These are designed to support teachers to plan learning and teaching which builds on what children already know. Most teachers should improve their use of progression pathways to plan learning for children which is progressive and challenging.
- Staff ensure all children receive their curriculum entitlement of two hours of high-quality physical education. Senior leaders should ensure all children receive their entitlement to 1+2 languages. Children at almost all stages learn French. Older children learn Spanish. It is important that children have opportunities to build on their French language skills by continuing the language through all stages of primary.
- The attractive school library provides children with opportunities to develop their reading for enjoyment and reading skills. The provision is supported by a volunteer parent who works with staff to offer helpful literacy events, such as author talks. Staff also have a shoebox library to offer parents free access to a range of books. This supports them to read to their children and develop children's literacy at home.
- Staff work with a range of partners to enhance the curriculum offer to children. Partners such as ACE Voices and Aberdeen Football Club offer children opportunities to engage in further learning in expressive arts and to develop their leadership skills. Senior leaders and staff should consider how these opportunities could be embedded further into the curriculum offer made available to all children. This will ensure all children benefit from these experiences.
- Staff have developed a skills framework to support children to identify the skills they are developing through their learning. This has mostly been used by targeted children who engage in personalised support activities. It is helping these children to identify and measure their skills development during targeted work. Staff should consider how they can continue to support all children to speak confidently about the skills they develop across the curriculum.

## 2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- A majority of parents appreciate helpful feedback they receive on how their child is progressing in their learning. Staff arranged positive events inviting parents into school to learn about and experience aspects of their child's learning. Senior leaders should continue to explore creative ways to engage parents further.
- Staff send termly class newsletters to parents. This is supporting strong communication between school and families. Senior leaders regularly seek the views of parents through different approaches. This is leading to a majority of parents feeling that the school takes their views into account. There is scope to continue to develop the role of parents in reviewing the work of the school. Senior leaders should consider how they communicate with parents to explain how parental views shape school improvements.
- The Parent Council is very supportive of the school. It has organised a calendar of events to encourage parents and families to attend social activities. It engaged in fund raising to improve playground resources available to children. Staff should continue to collaborate with the Parent Council to encourage more parents to join.



## 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. At the time of the inspection, there were no identified areas for development.



### 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

- Children benefit from positive and mutually respectful relationships with staff. Staff create a nurturing and inclusive environment which helps almost all children to learn successfully. Most children recognise that they have a trusted adult that they can speak to if they need help. Children feel valued, are known as individuals, and cared for by staff.
- Children played an important role in reviewing the school's vision, values and aims. Staff supported children to create unicorn characters based on each of the REACH values. These are displayed in different contexts across the school. Characters include 'Respectful Ruby', 'Empathetic Emerald' and 'Challenging Charlie'. These encourage children to develop the ability to show care and compassion for others and recognise the importance of working hard. This is helping children's sense of responsibility and achievement.
- Most children feel safe in school. Staff use of the REACH values, and skilful interventions by pupil support assistants (PSAs) and teachers, support a reduction in bullying issues and conflict between children. Senior leaders demonstrate how the number of children excluded from school have significantly reduced over time. A few children in P7 are REACH ambassadors and support younger peers in the playground by role modelling positive values. These approaches support a calm and positive learning environment where children feel nurtured and valued as individuals.
- Most staff and children have a shared understanding of the importance of wellbeing. Senior leaders make meaningful references regularly to the wellbeing indicators during assemblies. Teacher plans indicate that health and wellbeing learning focuses on developing children's understanding of the wellbeing indicators. A majority of children can talk confidently about the wellbeing indicators and their relevance to their lives, both in and beyond school. Teachers should continue to develop the use of wellbeing indicators during learning activities. This will ensure all children can speak confidently about what it means to be safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible and included.
- Children talk knowledgeably about the importance of living healthy and active lives. They recognise the positive impact of enjoying a healthy diet and regular exercise. Children value and enjoy opportunities for physical education and access to activities that encourage them to be active. They would like more clubs offered across the school.
- Staff and children are beginning to become more aware of children's rights. This is helping children to see themselves as citizens and members of the local community. Teachers should consider how children's rights can be used more readily in daily classroom and school activities. Children would benefit from more learning about children's rights in real-life and relevant contexts. Staff recently delivered a well-received presentation to parents focusing on

the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Senior leaders plan to invite parents to see rights-based learning taking place in lessons. They should continue with strategies to engage parents more in the life of the school and help them to support children's understanding of rights.

- A few children have developed important skills from their involvement in an intergenerational project involving a local care home. This project is successfully led by a few PSAs. Children interact positively with residents completing art projects, doing jigsaws or playing games. Children are developing their social and interpersonal skills, including their sense of responsibility, through these activities.
- Staff understand and apply their statutory responsibilities in relation to meeting the additional support needs of learners. The school's approaches are embedded in legislation and national guidance such as Getting it Right for Every Child. Staff are committed to removing barriers to children's learning and wellbeing, and ensuring learning and achievement opportunities are accessible to all.
- Senior leaders and staff have focused on developing inclusive practice across the school. Teachers understand their responsibility to provide universal support to help meet the needs of all children in their class. Staff have used national professional learning on inclusive practice to help them review their classroom environment and consider barriers to inclusion. Teachers plan the physical and social environment, including structures and routines used to motivate and engage children. This has improved staff confidence in meeting the varied needs of children. Staff should continue to develop their classroom environments to ensure all children consistently feel included and respected.
- Support staff and PSAs offer a range of targeted supports for children who require additional support with their learning. This includes well-planned strategies to develop children's literacy skills. Staff regularly evaluate the impact of interventions to determine what is supporting improvements in children's outcomes. Staff are beginning to use visual displays and symbols to support children with limited communication skills to engage in their learning. This has the potential to help a few children to make learning more accessible.
- Children requiring help with their wellbeing access a range of small group spaces for personalised support. These allow support staff to help children develop a range of skills. These include communication, resilience, problem solving and sensory development. Support staff work very effectively with a wide range of partners who provide services to improve children's wellbeing. This has led to positive outcomes and progress for a few children.
- Senior leaders, staff and partners should now review their model of support to consider how more children could be supported within the classroom environment. Too often children accessing support miss aspects of their learning and teaching. This impacts on their ability to progress in their learning. It is important that the school now reviews this support as part of its wider approaches to inclusion. It should prioritise inclusive support within the classroom where this is possible.
- Senior leaders carefully monitor and track the support provided for children who have additional support needs. They share important information with teachers to inform practice within the classroom. Children's plans are maintained, updated often and reviewed regularly with children, parents and partners. Senior leaders use information gathered to track outcomes for different cohorts of children, such as those who have English as an additional language. This helps to ensure these cohorts are supported well to achieve success.

### 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

- Overall, the school's attainment data for 2022/23 shows that a majority of children at early and first level achieve appropriate levels of attainment in literacy and numeracy. Most children at second level achieve appropriate levels of attainment in listening and talking and reading. A majority of children at second level achieve appropriate levels of attainment in writing and numeracy. School data gathered on attainment is reliable. Teachers are increasingly confident in making judgements using National Benchmarks to support their evaluations of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels.
- A majority of children are making satisfactory progress from previous levels of attainment. A minority of children are making good progress. A majority of children with additional support needs are making satisfactory progress towards their individual targets in learning.

#### Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, a majority of children are making satisfactory progress from prior levels of attainment in literacy and English, with a few making good progress. Staff introduced new approaches to teaching writing at first level. This has significantly raised attainment in writing at this level.

#### Listening and talking

- Children who have recently achieved early level can identify rhyming words confidently. They need to continue to develop skills in turn taking and listening to others during group tasks. Children who have recently achieved first level contribute their ideas and opinions in discussions well. Children working towards second level contribute regularly to group discussions offering ideas, knowledge or opinions with supporting evidence. Across the school, children require further opportunities to apply learned skills to a range of contexts.

#### Reading

- Children who have recently achieved early level can answer simple questions about the text they have read. Children now need to apply their reading skills and strategies to a wider range of unseen texts. A majority of children who have recently achieved first level can identify and sequence the key points from a story. Children at first level are not yet confident in answering inferential and evaluative questions about familiar texts. Children working towards second level read with fluency, understanding and expression. They are less confident at identifying techniques authors use to engage readers, like word choice and emotive language. Across the school, children require more opportunities to read a range of texts, including non-fiction.

#### Writing

- Children who have recently achieved early level can write at least one sentence independently and attempt to use knowledge of sounds to spell familiar words correctly. They should now

apply their writing skills across a range of activities to show their learning. Children who have achieved first level write independently and punctuate most sentences correctly. They need to continue to develop spelling strategies to support them when spelling unfamiliar words. Children working towards second level understand the importance of up-levelling writing and use figurative language. They need to use a range of punctuation more accurately to ensure their writing makes sense to the reader. At all stages, children need more specific feedback on what they have done well, and what they need to do next to improve their writing further.

### **Numeracy and mathematics**

- Overall attainment in numeracy and mathematics is satisfactory.

### **Number, money and measure**

- Children who have recently achieved early level confidently recognise numbers from 0 to 20. They need to continue to develop their ability to apply addition and subtraction skills within money. Children who have recently achieved first level can explain the link between a digit, its place and its value in a whole number to three digits. They need to consolidate their understanding of simple equivalent fractions. Children working toward second level accurately divide whole numbers and decimal fractions by a single digit. They are less confident applying knowledge of common fractions and percentages to word problems.

### **Shape, position and movement**

- Children who have recently achieved early level accurately sort two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional (3D) objects using various criteria. Children who have recently achieved first level know that a right angle is 90 degrees and confidently use the compass points to provide directions. They need to continue to develop their ability to use mathematical language to describe the properties of a range of common 3D objects. Children working toward second level accurately identify the radius, diameter and circumference of a circle. They need to further develop their knowledge of complimentary and supplementary angles.

### **Information handling**

- Children who have recently achieved early level contribute well to pictorial displays and can interpret simple graphs to find out information. Children who have recently achieved first level select and use appropriate ways to gather and sort data for a specific purpose. Children working toward second level collect, organise and display data accurately and create bar graphs and line graphs confidently. Across the school, children need more opportunities to develop information handling skills, particularly when using digital technology.

### **Attainment over time**

- The profile of children's attainment varies over a period of time. Staff are aware that the pandemic impacted on areas of attainment, particularly for those children working at first level. Staff are taking appropriate steps to address this. They have introduced new resources and approaches for learning and teaching in literacy and numeracy. Children are capable of achieving more across their learning.

### **Overall quality of learners' achievements**

- Staff value children's achievements in and outside of school. Achievements are celebrated at assemblies, through achievement display boards and on social media channels. Children receive house points, 'shout outs' and values certificates. These help to build children's confidence and self-esteem. A minority of children develop their leadership skills and contribute to the life of the school and wider community through leadership roles. These include house and class captains, and as REACH Ambassadors. Through these roles, children develop important skills including problem-solving, decision-making, and collaboration. Children

improve their physical fitness and further develop their leadership by taking part in school clubs led by staff and partners. These include basketball, cycling proficiency and athletics festivals.

- Senior leaders track and monitor children's participation in achievement opportunities and the skills they develop. This helps staff identify children who need support to access opportunities. Senior leaders and staff should review and align the achievement tracker and skills progression with the school values. This should help children to make links between their learning, achievements and skills for learning, life and work.

### **Equity for all learners**

- Almost all staff have a clear understanding of the social, cultural, and economic context of the school. Senior leaders and staff strive to ensure that children are not disadvantaged by the cost of the school day. Senior leaders and staff work effectively with a variety of partners to support children and families facing financial hardship. Through these partnerships, families and children have benefitted from food banks, clothing and opportunities for personal achievement.
- Senior leaders are developing their use of Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) well to improve outcomes for children. They consult with children, parents and staff regularly to identify priorities. Additional staffing and partnership working supports the health and wellbeing of targeted children. This is impacting positively on the engagement in learning of a minority of children. Staff also uses PEF to provide resources to support children's progress in literacy and numeracy. Staff should continue to develop their approaches to monitoring and evaluating the impact of interventions funded by PEF. This will allow them to demonstrate better how they are accelerating progress for children living in poverty.

## 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.