

# Summarised inspection findings

**Portlethen Primary School and Nursery Class**

Aberdeenshire Council

27 August 2019

## Key contextual information

Portlethen School is a non-denominational school with a roll of 263 children allocated in 11 classes. The senior leaders have been in their substantive posts for three years. The school serves Portlethen catchment area. Most children transfer to Portlethen Academy at the end of P7. Portlethen School has achieved Rights Respecting School Award level 2, and the Fair Achievers Award. The school was designated an Enhanced Provision school in August 2017.

### 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

- The ethos and culture of the school reflect a clear commitment to developing positive and respectful relationships between staff and children. Children benefit from a supportive and nurturing learning environment. As a result, most children feel safe, and that the school is helping them to become more confident. The school is focused on developing children's rights and is enabling children to have their say through a variety of groups and experiences which the children enjoy. Under the leadership of the headteacher, the school has revised its vision, values and aims involving all stakeholders. Displays around the school clearly highlight the importance of the values. Across the school there are shared standards, which reflect the vision, values and aims. Children understand the school's well defined values to develop teamwork, trust, respect, achievement, inclusion and nurture (T TRAIN). Children are very proud of their school.
- The headteacher, supported by her leadership team, and staff ensure all children are included in a wide range of interesting learning experiences. Children participate in a wide range of opportunities to develop skills and attributes for life, learning and work, such as the weekly 'T TRAIN' activities and class buddies. A few children take on the role of teachers and lead some of these groups, such as dance, games and technologies.
- Across the school, most children are enthusiastic and keen to learn. Most children are engaged and motivated to learn during lessons. The school focus on nurture and positive approaches to behaviour and relationships is supporting children to become more resilient. Most children talk about their learning and know what their next steps are to make further progress. They make choices about their learning, and are involved in decision making about the school, for example, developing the values, improving the playground, and fundraising to support others. A few children are part of a targeted outdoor learning group as part of a cluster initiative. Staff should now consider how outdoor learning can be developed across the school.
- In most lessons, learning activities are well-matched to a majority of children's needs. Most children work very well in groups and pairs. There is scope for children to work individually to increase the pace of their own learning. There is scope to ensure activities are always challenging enough for

all children, and including those who are higher attaining. In a few lessons too much time is spent on tasks which are too easy.

- Overall, the quality of teaching is good. In almost all classes teacher explanations and instructions are clear. Teachers use a range of learning environments and approaches to motivate and engage children. Digital technology is used very effectively to support and enhance learning across the school. Children confidently describe how they use a variety of technology to support their learning, and enjoy showcasing their work. Digital leaders are effective in supporting their peers and class teachers in its use across learning. Digital literacy is developing effectively across the school. Children in P5/6 plan collaboratively in teams, explicitly supporting each other, and create 'how to' videos to teach other children across the school to use specific apps of their choice. Their communication skills in Makaton reach a wider audience through the videos they post on social media.
- The school is focused on developing the young workforce (DYW), and regularly explores with the children the different kind of jobs people do. The children are developing the four capacities of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) very well, for example through their involvement in achieving the Rights Respecting Schools gold award, Sport Scotland award, and the development of the symbolised environment for 'Total Communication'. Children know their views are sought and acted upon. They contribute with great enthusiasm to the life of the school and to the wider community through a variety of events, and business links with the local community. The school is now well placed to review the wide range of experiences and opportunities children participate in to ensure children's skills are progressing appropriately. This will support teachers to embed those which are making the most difference for children's progress, and are particularly leading to raising attainment and achievement for all children.
- Senior leaders work closely with staff to ensure standards across the school are well understood and met. Staff meetings focus on improving learning, teaching and assessment. Teachers share good practice regularly, and engage in peer observations giving feedback. They look beyond the school to compare and improve their practice. All teachers and a few support staff have leadership roles linked to the areas identified for school improvement. Monitoring of children's progress is well-planned through the school's quality assurance calendar.
- Effective approaches to collegiate working support class teachers in adopting a team approach to planning together both learning and holistic assessments. Staff successfully use a variety of assessment approaches across the curriculum, which results in most children being able to demonstrate their knowledge and skills. Assessment evidence is increasingly valid and reliable as teachers work within school, across stages and levels, and with cluster colleagues to build confidence in their professional judgements. As planned, they should continue with this good work in moderation activity alongside the continued embedding of the use of National Benchmarks to support shared expectation of standards for children's learning.
- Most children benefit from high-quality feedback so that they have a clear understanding of what they need to do to improve. This good practice should be shared to ensure consistency across the school. Almost all children value this feedback, which they confirm results in them being able to articulate their progress and next steps in almost all lessons. A consistent focus on quality feedback related to the progression in skills should be encouraged by senior leaders. Self and peer assessment is a feature of almost all lessons.
- The purpose of their learning is consistently shared with children using language that is relevant and meaningful. In a few lessons, approaches to sharing the purpose of learning

slowed the pace and should be reviewed to support increased challenge. In the best examples, children work with their class teacher to identify how they would know they have been successful. Children value the opportunities to challenge themselves when offered a choice in differentiated learning activities.

- Using the local authority tracking system and progression framework, children's progress is tracked in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Children articulate with confidence their targets which are related to literacy and numeracy. They identify how these meaningful targets support their progress, and in the best examples, how they work with their class teacher to personalise them. Staff are now well placed to expand this to include all curricular areas.
- Regular tracking and attainment meetings between senior leaders and teachers are held as a key part of the school's quality assurance processes, and are valued by staff. These discussions identify interventions for individual children as appropriate and contribute effectively to the sharper focus on raising attainment and achievement. Specific groups of children are tracked as cohorts. The school's tracking and monitoring system is helping senior leaders to have an overview of the progress of all children. As a result of the school's approaches to assessment, tracking and monitoring, staff have a good understanding of each child's strengths and areas for development, including for children with barriers to learning. The school has already identified the need to develop its approaches to measuring the impact of targeted interventions over time.

## 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.

### 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 children's 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 children's attainment in literacy and numeracy is good. For 2017/18 the school reported that almost all children in P1 achieved the appropriate CfE level in reading, with most children achieving the appropriate CfE level in numeracy, writing, listening and talking. By the end of P4 and P7, the majority of children achieved the appropriate CfE level in both literacy and numeracy.
- For 2018/19 the school is predicting that most children will achieve early level literacy and numeracy, with almost all children achieving listening and talking, by the end of P1. By the end of P4, the school is predicting that most children will achieve first level reading and numeracy, the majority will achieve first level writing, and almost all will achieve first level listening and talking. By the end of P7, the school is predicting that the majority of children will achieve second level in both literacy and numeracy. From inspection activity, we agree with the school's predictions.
- Overall, there is a dip in attainment in numeracy, reading, and listening and talking as children progress through the primary stages. Senior leaders have correctly identified this and are using a number of interventions, starting at early level, to improve attainment. There are early indications that these interventions are helping to reduce the attainment dip as children progress through the primary stages.
- Staff are building confidence in their professional judgements through opportunities for professional learning and planned moderation activities. Staff are benefitting from the work of the Quality Assurance and Moderation Support Officer (QAMSO). Recent professional learning on the use of National Benchmarks in literacy and numeracy is strengthening teacher judgements further. Staff are also gaining confidence using a broader range of assessment evidence to make predictions and report on progress. Overall, this is helping to improve the accuracy of teachers' professional judgements.

#### Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, based on data submitted by the school, children's attainment in reading, writing and listening and talking is good. The school's strategy to raise attainment in literacy through its Emerging Literacy Developmental Approach is beginning to impact on attainment at the early level, in particular in reading and writing where levels of attainment are above both local authority and national figures. The school should continue to build on this good work to raise attainment further, and in particular at second level. The school should continue as planned with its focus on developing literacy skills.

## Listening and talking

- Children's progress in listening and talking is good across the school. Children are articulate and confident, interacting positively and supportively with each other when working collaboratively on activities. At early level, almost all children enjoy exploring and playing with the patterns and sounds of language. They can hear and say rhyming words. Skills in talking to a wider audience are being scaffolded and developed. At first level, almost all children demonstrate knowledge and understanding of non-verbal cues during discussion. They give oral presentations and identify appropriate feedback for improvement for their peers. At second level, the majority of children ask and respond to evaluative questions, with a knowledge of techniques to engage the listener. They would benefit from further opportunities to develop listening and talking skills through for example, debating.

## Reading

- Overall, children's progress in reading is good. At early level, most children can use their knowledge of sounds, letters and patterns to read words. They can blend groups of phonemes to read words. At first level, most children can identify their favourite authors and genres. They read fluently and with expression and can answer inferential questions about a text. At second level, the majority of children can summarise their class novel using a software programme, identifying the setting and main characters who move the plot forward. They successfully identify and use a range of reading strategies to support comprehension. Children develop confidence in reading with both adult reading buddies and pets who visit the school. As planned, the school should continue to build on this increasingly successful foundation, taking advantage of the launch of the new library, and its potential as a vehicle to increase further enjoyment of reading, raising its profile across the school.

## Writing

- Overall, children's progress in writing is satisfactory. At early level, most children are developing their skills in letter formation and can write simple sentences using capital letters and full stops, using some of their own ideas. They are learning to research and create non-fiction texts for example a fact file about a country. At first level, the majority of children use note taking skills, selecting and organising appropriate ideas and relevant information. They can share their opinion to persuade their reader. At second level, the majority of children have a good knowledge of punctuation features and apply this to create a range of short and extended texts. They can write for a range of purposes and readers and display particular enthusiasm for opportunities to develop imaginative writing skills for example 'Christmas Chapter' writing. Standards of presentation are a clear focus throughout the school and accurate spelling is encouraged. The school should continue to develop a planned, progressive approach to teaching writing skills ensuring all children are making appropriate progress.

## Attainment in numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, attainment in numeracy and mathematics is good. Children are positive about their learning in numeracy and mathematics. There is scope to raise attainment for all learners in the school. As part of a raising attainment strategy, senior leaders correctly identify the need to increase the pace and level of challenge in a majority of lessons. In addition, there is a need to ensure that children are given opportunities to consolidate their learning in numeracy. Likewise, there is a need to ensure that children are experiencing more opportunities to apply their numeracy learning in a range of contexts. This will help children to revisit prior learning.

## Number, money and measure

- By the end of early level, most children can double numbers to a total of 10, and can count forwards and backwards within 20. Most children compare and describe lengths, capacity and weight using everyday language including longer, shorter, more, less, heavier and lighter.

They can apply addition and subtraction skills to pay for items up to ten pence using correct coins. They can name the days of the week in sequence. By the end of first level, most children are confident rounding whole numbers to the nearest 10 and 100. They can solve addition and subtraction problems with three digit whole numbers and can tell the time using digital and analogue clocks as appropriate to their stage. Most children can use the correct notation for common fractions and can use pictures to demonstrate their understanding of fractions. By the end of second level, most children are confident rounding numbers and can correctly select the most appropriate units for measurement. The majority of children can solve simple algebraic equations. They would benefit from further work on calculating fractions and percentages of a quantity. At second level, children would also benefit from further work on calculating the area and perimeter of simple 2D shapes.

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

- By the end of early level, most children can identify and describe common two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects. They can use the language of position and movement, such as behind, above, forwards and backwards correctly. By the end of first level, most children can identify right angles and know that right angles measure 90 degrees. They can use mathematical language to describe the properties of common two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects including side, face, edge, vertex and base. Most children can identify symmetry in patterns and create symmetrical designs with one or more lines of symmetry. By the end of second level, most children can measure and identify acute, obtuse, straight, right and reflex angles, and can explain the difference between these. They can accurately measure and draw angles. They can plot points using coordinate notation, and identify the line of symmetry in a wide range of two-dimensional shapes. At second level, children would benefit from further work on the properties of circles, including the use of the terms radius, diameter and circumference.

### **Information handling**

- At early level, most children can use their knowledge of colour, shape and size to match and sort items. At first level, most children can use tally marks to record information. At second level, most children can present information using bar graphs and can draw accurate conclusions from graphs and charts. Children at second level can use the language of probability accurately to describe the likelihood of simple events occurring. Children can also use their numeracy learning in real life contexts. For example, children in P5 use bar graphs and pie charts to show the different types of technology used by children in Portlethen School.

### **Attainment overtime**

- There is an inconsistent pattern of attainment over time. The school population dropped by approximately one third at the start of session 2016/17 due to the opening of a new school. As a result, care must be taken when attempting to draw conclusions about attainment over time.
- Senior leaders recognise the need to raise attainment across the school. Through data analysis and their knowledge of each child, senior leaders are able to identify attainment trends and plan appropriate interventions. For example, to raise literacy attainment, the school is investing in a literacy pilot project at early level. Although at an early stage of development, initial indications suggest that this intervention is helping to strengthen children's literacy skills. Senior leaders correctly identify the need to continue with such interventions at first and second level. In addition, they recognise the need to raise attainment in numeracy at all levels. There is scope to review all approaches to raising attainment to ensure that resources are targeting the initiatives that will lead to the greatest learning gains for all children.



## Overall quality of learners' achievements

- The wide range of opportunities within the school is helping children to develop the four capacities of CfE. All children actively participate in the life of the school through their involvement in pupil groups such as the Fairtrade, 'Sporty Party' and eco. For example, children have achieved noticeable success as digital leaders, effectively impacting learning beyond their own classes and peers by hosting 'busy breakfasts' sessions to support staff development.
- All children talk passionately about their participation in T-TRAIN activity groups, with some groups being initiated and led by children, such as, gymnastics, curling and coding. All children are encouraged to share personal achievements gained both within and out with the school. The school works in partnership with Active Schools and community members to provide clubs out of school hours. Children's achievements are recognised and celebrated at weekly assemblies and throughout the school's wall displays. The school's achievements have been recognised through national and local accreditation schemes such as the Digital School Award, the Young Aberdeenshire Volunteer Award and the Donkey Breed Society's Club of the year. As a result, children participating are developing skills for learning, life and work.
- Through the school's wider achievement tracking system, all children's participation and achievements are recorded and analysed. Specific interventions are planned for those children identified as at risk of missing out. The school is now ready to develop this further and ensure that all children are aware of the skills they are gaining from these experiences. Senior leaders have identified possible ways of utilising the 'Target Setting Books' and new digital reporting formats to record children's progress in their developing skills and attributes.

## Equity for all learners

- Senior leaders and staff know the children, their families and the community very well, and as a result have developed positive relationships. They understand the barriers to learning faced by children and have effective systems in place to monitor the attainment and participation of all children within the school.
- Pupil Equity Funding has been used for additional support staffing and resources to improve attainment for targeted children. Senior leaders report that such interventions are leading to improvements for specific children. Further work is required to evaluate fully the impact of the interventions. The school has systems in place to support families who require it with activities and trips.

## Practice worth sharing more widely

- Very good involvement of children in the development of digital technologies across the school, and particularly through digital literacy.

## Quality of provision of Special Unit

At the time of the inspection, eight children were included in the enhanced provision. Some children attend the provision for subjects such as literacy and numeracy, and attend mainstream classes for other activities. A few children attend mainstream classes for almost all activities. Children within the enhanced provision require additional support, such as for ASD, and learning and communication needs.

### QI 2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

- Almost all children engage well in their learning and participate enthusiastically in activities. They are able to talk eagerly about books and topics that interest them such as animals and the ducklings that are hatching in their classroom. Almost all children appear happy and enjoy learning within the unit. Almost all activities are adult led and children would benefit from opportunities to allow them to develop greater independence and responsibility for their own learning. There is limited use of digital technology and staff should consider how they could make better use of technology to enhance children's learning. Children respond well to practical tasks and activities such as dance, Makaton and cooking. They would benefit from more active learning in literacy and numeracy with less reliance on worksheets. The pace of learning for some children is too slow and a few children need further challenge.
- Children have a few opportunities to make choices such as the music chosen for the good morning routine. Staff should consider how they can allow children to be more involved in decision making and leadership within the daily routines. For example, children should have greater responsibility for snack time and for organising resources they need in their learning.
- Children's progress is assessed through observation of planned learning activities. Assessment information is recorded termly in additional support needs (ASN) planning sheets and individual educational plans (IEPs). Written evaluations within these plans do not always match the planned learning. Children receive useful information in jotters to help them understand what they have done well and what they need to do to improve. Staff should now review assessment approaches and ensure they are gathering information about children's progress across a range of contexts. There is a need to improve the reliability of information and include children more in assessing their own learning.
- IEPs are in place for all children within the enhanced provision. These plans identify specific targets that children are working towards within their social and emotional wellbeing. In addition, children benefit from individualised planning in literacy and numeracy. There is scope for targets to be more challenging. Tracking and monitoring approaches should now focus on the individual progress children are making with a greater emphasis on improving their attainment and achievement.

### QI 3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

- The school provided information indicating that children within the enhanced provision are attaining at CfE levels appropriate to their needs. Approaches to assessment, moderation, tracking and monitoring need to be more robust to ensure this data is reliable. There is potential for some children to attain better.
- Overall, attainment in literacy is good. Almost all children are making good progress in reading and writing with a few children making very good progress. Almost all children are making good progress in listening and talking.

## **Attainment in Literacy and English**

### **Reading**

- Children can talk about the types of books they enjoy and identify the author and other features of books. They read aloud and use pictures well to provide clues. Children decode unfamiliar words using their knowledge of sounds and they are confident in attempting new words such as ingredients within a recipe. They can successfully answer questions about aspects of their books such as the plot and characters.

### **Writing**

- Children can form letters, words and sentences relevant to their stage and strengths. A few children present their work very well using correct punctuation. Some children face challenges in handwriting and an increased use of digital technology would support them in this area. Children would benefit from more opportunities develop their writing within a wider range of contexts and to develop their creative writing skills.

### **Listening and talking**

- Almost all children listen well to adults and to each other. They engage confidently with peers and visitors. They demonstrate a good use of vocabulary and are able to talk well about aspects of their learning. Staff should continue to develop children's skills in this area and build on this positive aspect of their literacy development. With increased opportunities, there is scope for children make even better progress in listening and talking.

## **Attainment in numeracy and mathematics**

- Overall, attainment in numeracy and mathematics is good. Most children are making good progress with a few children making very good progress. Planning in numeracy does not always reflect what children are able to do. As a result, information about children's attainment is not reliable. Staff should review how they assess, plan, track and monitor children's progress in numeracy to ensure learning is appropriately matched to their needs.

## **Number money and measure**

- Children can add and subtract numbers to 20. A few can multiply and divide numbers correctly using mental maths techniques. Children use counting materials well to support their calculations. Some children are able to identify coins and understand their value. A few children understand the value of each digit within four digit numbers. Children can work with clocks and record specific times. They are developing a good understanding of days of the week and sequencing of events. A few children can calculate the area of 2D shapes.

## **Attainment over time**

- Children within the enhanced provision are making good progress across literacy, numeracy and in their social and emotional wellbeing. Targets within IEPs provide information related to progress in areas such as developing relationships with others and self-help skills. For some children, more challenging targets would result in better progress. More frequent review of targets would also help increase the pace of progress. The school does not have robust information about progress over time within literacy and numeracy. Children's work in jotters and reports to parent/carers demonstrates progress in some areas of literacy and numeracy. Improved assessment approaches and better recording of evidence would provide more detailed information about children's strengths and gaps in their learning.

## **Overall quality of learner's achievements**

- Children in the enhanced provision have good opportunities to experience success and achievements. They enjoy and respond to praise and positive feedback. Children benefit from inclusion in leadership groups with their mainstream peers. Participation in these groups enables them to be involved in decisions about their school. Staff in the enhanced provision

work collaboratively with mainstream staff to ensure children have opportunities to participate in whole school events and assemblies. Children are developing important life skills and improving their physical wellbeing through activities such as swimming, social football and the Donkey Breed Society Care Awards. Through the duckling-hatching project, they are developing an understanding of life cycles and the importance of caring for animals. Staff in the enhanced provision should continue to look for opportunities for children to develop skills and achieve success across a range of contexts.

### **Equity for all learners**

- Staff across the school are committed to meeting the needs of children within the enhanced provision. Children access mainstream classes and activities appropriate to their needs. As they develop approaches to tracking and monitoring, senior leaders should continue to ensure that children are being appropriately challenged. More rigorous tracking and monitoring of progress for this group of learners will ensure they achieve and attain as highly as possible.

## 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.