

Summarised inspection findings

Bun-sgoil Srath na h-Apainne - Strath of Appin Primary School

Argyll and Bute Council

22 August 2023

Key contextual information

Bun-sgoil Srath na h-Apainne - Strath of Appin Primary School is a small rural school with a roll of 25 pupils. For most of the week, the English Medium class is taught in two groups with two teachers. There is one class for Gaelic Medium Education. This is registered separate to the school as a Gaelic Unit. At some primary stages, there are a few children, or no children. There is an early learning and childcare playroom. This is an English medium service with a few activities that enable some learning of Gaelic.

The school has experienced difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff. The headteacher had been in post for four weeks at the time of the inspection. Her appointment has brought stability following some temporary appointments. The headteacher and a principal teacher form a senior leadership team. Currently, a local authority education officer is providing teaching cover in Gaelic Medium Education for part of the week. The local authority has worked with the University of the Highlands and Islands for solutions to recruitment in Gaelic Medium Education.

1.3 Leadership of change

weak

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 staff and pupils of Bun-sgoil Srath na h-Apainne - Strath of Appin Primary School create a warm and welcoming ethos based on the school's values. Children, staff, parents and partners work well together. Senior leaders, staff and children across the school are renewing the school values and visions. Parents will soon be consulted on the values and vision to ensure their engagement with what underpins the ethos and life of the school. This should build on parents' positive engagement through the Parent Council.
- The headteacher had been in post for four weeks at the time of the inspection. She has worked well with another promoted member of staff to glean an evaluative overview of most aspects of the school. She is getting to know staff, pupils, parents and partners and has made some initial changes to support improvement. Children appreciate the value that she places on their views for what should change in the school.
- The headteacher recognises that she needs to establish more effective quality assurance arrangements. The headteacher has started to meet with staff to support improvement. Her professional advice is making a difference. Across stages, staff have taken part in professional enquiry and peer observation activities. These approaches need to be re-established robustly to gather reliable evidence of what needs to be improved at Bun-sgoil Srath na h-Apainne - Strath of Appin School.
- Staff would benefit from making much more and deeper use of published quality assurance frameworks, with the Advice on Gaelic Education (2022) and Realising the Ambition (2020). This would assist in making more meaningful links between self-evaluation and improvement planning to achieve well-paced change. Staff are focusing on improving important matters such

as children's wellbeing to underpin the work they are doing to address gaps in children's progress and attainment.

- The headteacher should now put in place with staff a more strategic approach to raising attainment. This should monitor how well all children's attainment is being raised, with gaps reduced. There are a few areas constraining children's progress and attainment. Staff should increase their planning of progress across curricular areas, subjects and contexts of the curriculum. This should enable children to have more individualised learning, which gives children opportunities to apply their learning in unfamiliar contexts. Staff should increase the pace of change and improvement.
- The school is in receipt of some Pupil Equity Funding (PEF). This is being used for resources and experiences to support raising attainment. The headteacher should continue to consult with the school community on allocating PEF that is targeted to improve attainment in literacy and numeracy.
- The headteacher should improve strategic approaches to immersion education. This should maximise the time children learn through Gaelic to meet statutory guidance. It would be useful to capture expectations on total immersion in a policy, which could also be used in evaluating the quality of practice. The headteacher should continue to maximise the additional 1140 hours of early learning and childcare to begin immersion education at the beginning of children's learning journey, should they choose this option. This should still enable all children to learn Gaelic and retain an option to access Gaelic Medium Education from P1, or the nursery.
- The headteacher is reinstating professional review and development. Staff should continue to be supported and empowered to lead school improvements. Senior leaders should continue to ensure that professional learning supports staff in taking forward all priorities for improvement across the whole establishment.
- Children participate in pupil groups to support improvement. Of late, the groups are integrated into the weekly curriculum. The older children also lead clubs for their peers. Children are proud to take on roles of responsibility. Children make a positive difference to improving 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

- Staff and children benefit from a welcoming and nurturing ethos with positive relationships. Staff are building further on this by supporting children to develop an understanding of children's rights. Children are encouraged to express their views. They are developing well as confident and responsible individuals. Children are kind and respectful to one another, and to adults and visitors to the school. They support each other well within the multi-stage classes. Staff know children well and are well-placed in support them with their learning. As a result, almost all children are engaged in their learning.
- Most children work well independently, as pairs and in small groups. Across the school, literacy and numeracy lessons are well matched to most learners' needs for the majority of time. A few children would benefit from more challenging activities such as applying their skills to real-life contexts. Staff motivate and inspire children well during most whole-school approaches, such as starter tasks. These approaches enable collaborative working, and benefit some children's social skills. Teachers need to plan tasks and activities that meet the different needs and abilities of learners across the primary classes. They need to evaluate how children across the school learning as one group for long periods of time may adversely impact on children's fluency in Gaelic and total immersion approaches. On a few occasions, teachers should increase the pace of learning.
- In most classes, teachers ensure explanations are clear and concise. Support staff interact well with individuals and groups during lessons. They support individuals using appropriate interventions. Teachers use a range of approaches in class. They involve children in talking about what they will be learning in lessons and what they need to do to be successful. In most classes, teachers provide verbal feedback to children throughout their learning. Children at the upper stages within the English Medium class receive helpful written feedback about their writing. Teachers should now work together to develop a more consistent approach to providing feedback across learning experiences. Teachers should be more explicit about the skills children acquire. This will help children build on their strengths and identify areas of learning that they require more time to develop.
- Teachers plan some play-based practice through the medium of English. However, this is not consistent across the school. Staff should continue to develop children's play-based learning experiences, with planned, total immersion play for those in Gaelic Medium Education. Staff should prioritise improving the learning environment for play. They should plan the curriculum for play to promote effective and regular interactions between staff and children during total immersion play. Staff would benefit from further professional learning on play, as well as more use of early years national practice guidance. They would also benefit from looking outwards to other schools where there is high-quality, total immersion, play-based learning.

- Staff have developed an outdoor learning programme. As planned, this should be extended to provide further opportunities for children to learn beyond the classroom in meaningful and relevant ways. Experiences should be more integral to planning and focus more on skills development and accreditation. Community trips and visitors to the school help widen children's learning. Children contribute effectively to the life of the school and wider community. This is through leadership roles and participating in local events, such as whole-school shows.
- Teachers use technology well to support teaching. Children have access to personal devices. Children record their learning on virtual platforms. These can be accessed by parents and carers. This practice enables sharing of learning and should be extended to focus more on skills and next steps in children's learning. Children in Gaelic Medium Education make use of the digital online programme, 'Misneachd' through e-Sgoil. A few children's skills in signing Makaton are developing well. Children's listening and conversation skills in Gàidhlig are also being developed using technology and the programme 'Misneachd'. Staff should continue with their plans to encourage speakers of Gaelic to visit the school. Children should engage with other learners of Gaelic.
- Staff use a range of assessments, including national standardised assessments, to support their professional judgements in literacy and English, and numeracy and mathematics. Teachers in the Gaelic Medium class are reintroducing national standardised assessments for literacy and Gàidhlig (MCNG), following a two-year gap in their availability. Staff track the progress of individual learners, including those who need additional support with their learning. Teachers need to engage in moderation activities, within the school and learning community, to develop further their judgements. Teachers identify potential barriers to learning and plan a range of supports to help children progress. The impact of these interventions has yet to be measured. It is important that interventions are closely monitored and reviewed regularly.
- Children are involved in planning aspects of their learning. Teachers make use of progression pathways in literacy and numeracy to track children's progress. They are also developing the use of pathways for a few other curricular areas. Teachers need to ensure that pathways for all of the curricula are in place. These should reflect the school's unique local context. This should include embedding children's learning of Gaelic language within its culture, social and economic context.
- Teachers monitor children's progress at three key points in the session. They need to continue to increase their knowledge and use of the National Benchmarks. Teachers' planning should clearly show how individuals and groups of children are demonstrating challenge and application across all areas of learning. This would in turn help to raise attainment across the school. Staff in the Gaelic Medium Education need to improve children's vocabulary and fluency in Gaelic, and track robustly the progress being made by individuals. The use of a more varied progression framework for Gaelic language would assist in them in this process.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- The headteacher and school community are reviewing the curriculum rationale to reflect more fully, Curriculum for Excellence. They are particularly reviewing how well the four contexts of learning are a priority in the curriculum. The headteacher and staff have identified the improvement of total immersion as part of the future vision for the curriculum.
- Staff have still to develop an overview of how well they cover the outcomes and experiences for Curriculum for Excellence across levels. They also need to use the experiences and outcomes and design principles in planning learning across the four contexts of the curriculum. Children need to be aware of the skills and capacities they are developing within the curriculum.
- Staff should unpack further the benefits of interdisciplinary learning. They should do this while planning further progress in subjects and curriculum areas. Staff should use the sequencing of interdisciplinary learning and outcomes to support language development in Gaelic Medium Education. As children build on personal and social language, contexts should provide progression in language development too. Contexts for linking learning across subjects include contemporary and environmental issues such as climate change.
- Staff should increase their planning for assessment as part of learning. They should make more use of National Benchmarks to ensure national standards are understood and met.
- Staff, children and parents work collaboratively to support children's learning. The school makes regular use of the outdoors and local community. As a result, children are developing confidence and transferable skills, such as teamwork. Children talk positively about being outdoors and feel that it helps them to learn. As planned, senior leaders and staff should embed more progressive planning for outdoor learning across all stages. This should include continuing to develop the school grounds to support high-quality learning experiences.
- Commendably, all children learn Gaelic. In the early to second levels more clarity and understanding is required of immersion and how it is integral to Gaelic Medium Education. Children do not benefit from enough early total immersion play, early literacy development through play and regular, high-quality interactions in Gaelic. The school needs more resources to improve immersion, including staffing. Teachers should continue to develop experiences in Gaelic (Learners) that encourage creativity, curiosity and life-long learning of the language. Teachers should be aiming to achieve the second level outcomes of Gaelic (Learners) by P7.
- Children have insufficient opportunities for immersion. Senior leaders should review the time allocated to immersion, and the purpose and challenge from multi-stage whole-school learning. This ensures that time for Gaelic Medium Education is maximised. Senior leaders should promote more clearly children's right to learning their indigenous language and what equity of provision means in a dual medium school.
- All children receive their full entitlement to two hours high-quality physical education each week. The headteacher should monitor that this is consistently of high quality.
- Teachers provide Gaelic (Learners) as the first additional language. French, and now Makaton, are second additional languages. Staff should also increase awareness of culture and heritage in the curriculum and the benefits of bilingualism within the curriculum.
- The headteacher should continue to revisit the purpose of homework. A few stakeholders need clarity on what constitutes good practice in learning at home.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- Parents are very supportive of the school. They appreciate the very caring and supportive approach of senior leaders and all staff. Parents and the community welcome opportunities to engage with the school.
- Families benefit from the range of strategies used to maintain communication, such as a digital app and newsletters. A few parents would like to be more informed about their children's learning and their progress.
- Almost all parents feel encouraged to be involved with the Parent Council. Parents are informed regularly of the Parent Council's work. The Parent Council leads a range of fundraising activities. All children benefit from experiences, such as trips and events, being funded with no barriers from cost. Parents have enabled children to have their own laptop.
- Parents need to be advised better of the approaches of Gaelic Medium Education from the commencement of children's education journey.

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

satisfactory

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 work well together to nurture positive and supportive relationships across the school community. They ensure that children's wellbeing is given prominence. This is supporting children to effectively manage their emotional wellbeing. Children, staff, parents and partners describe the school as having a supportive and caring ethos, which is evident. Staff know children and their families well and their knowledge is having a positive impact on wellbeing, inclusion and socialising for almost all children. Staff should continue to engage children in discussions, in English and Gaelic, about the school's vision and values.
- Most children are familiar with the wellbeing indicators through characters such as 'Sean Safe' and 'Healthy Harry'. Children complete termly wellbeing forms. Teachers analyse these responses to identify and address concerns. Children feel comfortable sharing their views with an adult in school. They trust staff to listen and care for them. Children's emotional wellbeing is improving, along with their leadership and independence skills. Staff and children recognise the benefits to wellbeing of regular exercise and engagement in activities outdoors.
- Children across the school are encouraged to take responsibility for aspects of school life. Older children enjoy their responsibilities as 'clan leaders' and buddies to younger children. Children in P5-P7 are developing their leadership skills through the Young Leader programme. Pupil groups and committees meet regularly to discuss themes relating to children's rights, global goals and environmental issues. Staff should encourage children to reflect on the skills that they are acquiring through such roles and how these prepare them for the world of work. Staff involve children in events to support charities. These are increasing children's awareness of the needs of others and promote an awareness of empathy and respect. Staff have recently commenced enterprising skills projects within their classes. This will enhance further leadership skills, as well as introducing children to financial education.
- Staff have just started to track and monitor progress in health and wellbeing. Moving forward, the headteacher needs to work with staff to ensure that all children experience a broad and progressive health and wellbeing curriculum. As part of this programme, teachers should plan opportunities for children to explore diversity and discrimination. This should include the role of Gaelic in fostering positive attitudes to inclusion, equality and equity. Staff are planning to adopt a health and wellbeing programme, working collaboratively with cluster schools. This will involve children working with peers from neighbouring schools. In doing so, individual children represented in small class year groups will benefit from discussing age and stage-appropriate health issues with peers.
- The headteacher is aware of her roles and responsibilities relating to statutory requirements and codes of practice. The school is well supported by partners, including visits fortnightly by two church ministers. Their visits help to fulfil the requirements for religious observance, which is at times throughout the year, carried out within local churches. Staff monitor attendance and

are aware of procedures to follow for example, in the event of bullying or child protection issues arising.

- Staff have established procedures to identify children who have barriers to their learning. Teachers put in place appropriate action plans, or individualised educational plans and procedures, for individuals who may require additional support. Support staff work effectively with children in class, individually and in groups. They provide a number of interventions to address gaps in learning for a few children. There is scope to review the interventions that are in place as many should be incorporated into teachers' future more robust planning of learning. Staff should review their learning support provision and interventions regularly to measure impact of progress and attainment. In taking this forward, teachers should ensure all targets within support plans are clear and measurable. A few children benefit from targeted support from other agencies.
- Children in Gaelic Medium Education benefit from effective targeted support through the online Gaelic programme, 'Misneachd'. Teachers should maximise and promote parents' use of other available online resources for Gaelic, such as 'Giglets' and 'Gaelic4Parents'. Their use would allow children opportunities to hear Gaelic more widely in class and extend total immersion practices. Staff across the school need to review the frequency of whole-school learning events where these are delivered through the medium of English. This is to avoid dilution of children's fluency in Gaelic, as well as ensuring equity of access and maintaining an inclusive approach to Gaelic. The headteacher and staff should make increased use of the Statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education (2017). The headteacher needs to detail the options for Gaelic in the school's handbook.
- The school submitted self-evaluation information related to compliance with the Nutritional Regulations and key duties as required by The Schools (Health Promotion and Nutrition) (Scotland) Act 2007(the Act). The inspector also looked at documentation and practice relating to the effectiveness of whole school approaches to improving the health and wellbeing of children through food in school. Areas for development have been agreed with the school and the catering provider.

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 English and literacy and Gàidhlig

- Most children are making satisfactory progress in literacy and English. Their attainment is satisfactory, with a few children's attainment being good. Most children are on track to meet expected levels. In listening and talking, children convey their ideas well and justify their views. They talk confidently in a range of situations and audiences. Their vocabulary is developing well. At the early and first levels, a few children are refocusing on phonics and early reading skills. By the end of the second level, children read a range of lengthy texts and are familiar with the author's techniques to engage readers. They use reading skills for information and are familiar with fact and opinion. Children also write very well, at length with accurate spelling and punctuation. They are able to take notes from oral texts to produce clear summaries.
- A key message for attainment in literacy and Gàidhlig is that children's progress would be enhanced with sufficient total immersion. Children's total immersion begins in P1. This results in children having to show progress towards a curriculum that is designed to best be commenced from age three. Children also miss out on the benefits of learning Gaelic and set phrases through total immersion play in a nursery setting.
- Most children show their understanding of Gaelic by successfully following instructions. Most children listen well in classes. Too many children respond to Gaelic questions in English. Children are not consistently using Gaelic when talking to each other and when responding to the ideas of others within groups. Children require further support to reduce their use of English in Gaelic communication. This would be achieved by building further on total immersion within a range of contexts that develops children's vocabulary for real-life purposes. Children read familiar texts. They spell most common words correctly. By the end of the first level, children write a short paragraph, most of which is legible. Children are reliant on a lot of scaffolding to support their writing. They would benefit from greater emphasis on immersion and talking in contexts to support their writing more independently.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, attainment and progress in numeracy and mathematics is satisfactory.

Number, money and measure

- Across the school, children develop their understanding of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division appropriate to their stage. At the early level, across both mediums, most children are using the numbers 0-20 in counting and to add objects within 10. Children working at early level in Gaelic Medium Education are able to compare lengths of ribbons. At first level, most can accurately measure straight and curved lengths in centimetres. They are beginning to use Gaelic phrases while comparing lengths. In the English Medium class, children working at first and second level investigate multiplication tables, appropriate to their age and stage, using a range of games and strategies. By the end of second level, most are able to complete written

division calculations involving decimals. Across the school, children need to consolidate and apply their learning in a range of contexts to ensure depth and application of learning. Most children are not able to apply the knowledge of number facts they demonstrate confidently in class in shopping tasks and activities. Children should have regular play opportunities, for example in shops, to improve their understanding of money and calculating change. As planned, older children should begin to learn about budgets and financial education through enterprise activities.

Shape, position and movement

- Almost all children at first and second level can identify a range of two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects. Most children at first level are able to name the compass points and use directional language to plan a route. At second level, children in the English Medium class understand the terminology of angles. Children in the Gaelic Medium Education need to revise Gaelic mathematical vocabulary and phrases regularly within immersion practices. This would help reduce children's reliance and use of English while engaging in learning mathematics.

Information handling

- At the early stages, children are able to sort objects by size and colour. A few children are able to identify and explain information within a pie chart on an 'Eat well' poster. However, across the school, children are not yet confident with information handling. They need more opportunities to gather, collate, record and interpret information through the use of a range of graphs.

Attainment over time

- The education authority compiles an overview of children's achievement of a level in Curriculum for Excellence levels. This is a positive early step in having most of the key information in the one place to influence making holistic use of data to accelerate children's progress in raising further attainment. This attainment overview gives predicted levels of attainment by the end of the session. The headteacher should improve the strategic leadership of raising attainment and increase supportive dialogue with staff. This needs to outline how children's progress and attainment will be accelerated beyond satisfactory.
- The headteacher and staff check individual children's progress in numeracy, and literacy through Gaelic and English, and participation in achievements. They are at a very early stage of checking children's progress in health and wellbeing. Staff are not yet at the stage of capturing progress across all curriculum areas. They should continue with their plan to use an education authority tracking tool.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Most children enjoy success from opportunities for achievements, both within the school and outwith. As a result, children develop a range of skills and capacities. Children are not yet able to recognise all of the benefits.
- The older children develop leadership skills through leading clubs for the young children. Children in Gaelic Medium would benefit from having clubs through Gaelic to develop their language skills in different contexts. Children would also benefit from more involvement in national opportunities for total immersion to impact on their fluency.
- A range of partners support children's skills through successes in local events and activities. Children are successful in Highland and country dancing, singing, playing musical instruments and sports. Parents are keen to see more opportunities for their children to develop wider skills in music. Staff should explore further how partners for Gaelic may support this to enrich embedding Gaelic language, culture and fluency in children's experiences. Staff use some

certification through the medium of Gaelic, for example The John Muir Award and projects promoted by the Royal Society of Protection of Birds.

Equity for all learners

- Staff prioritised support for children's wellbeing as an important basis for closing gaps in progress. They have used Pupil Equity Funding, and generous funding from the Parent Council and partners, to improve wellbeing through experiences and resources. They have also used funding to impact on raising attainment in literacy and numeracy.
- Senior managers have considered the cost of the school day within their pupil equity planning. Staff should continue to support children and families in this way. This will ensure access and equality for all, for example in relation to attending events and across areas of the curriculum such as music tuition.
- Staff are aware of their rural location. They fund travel for children to make learning beyond the school possible. Parents and partners give time and resources to promote equity.

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.