

Summarised inspection findings

Reay Primary School

The Highland Council

3 June 2025

Key contextual information

Reay Primary School is a non-denominational school which serves the village of Reay, the hamlets of Dounreay, Forss, Lieurary, Shebster and Westfield and surrounding farms. At the time of inspection, there are 37 children on the school roll taught across two multi-stage classes. The school building has several classrooms, a library, family room and large hall. The headteacher has overall responsibility for Reay Primary School and another primary school. Children and staff work together regularly across both schools. Staffing includes the headteacher, a part-time principal teacher and several teaching and support staff.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

very 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

- Staff and children work very well together to create a welcoming and nurturing school ethos. Adults are caring and encouraging in their interactions with children. Through rights-based learning, children developed class and playground charters. These outline high expectations of behaviour. They are used well by staff and children to sustain a calm, purposeful learning environment. Children are very supportive of each other and demonstrate the recently refreshed school values. The whole school community show a deep commitment to the agreed motto, 'small school, big heart'. This underpins the school's inclusive and aspirational culture.
- Children work effectively in pairs, groups and independently. They particularly enjoy learning together as a school. Older children are proud to take on leadership and 'buddy' roles to support younger children. Almost all children are motivated, enthusiastic and engage fully in lessons and activities. Most children share their ideas and learning articulately with the school community, visitors and larger, less familiar audiences.
- Children benefit greatly from a well-planned range of visitors, learning experiences and excursions. This is a major strength of the school. Contexts are used very effectively by teachers and partners as vehicles for learning. For example, they link curricular lessons to areas such as science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) and Viking, Caithness and the Highlands. Staff make very effective use of stimulating learning spaces, the playground and garden, community facilities and nearby natural environments. Children apply their knowledge and skills well through local musical events, cultural festivals and competitions. As a result, children develop a meaningful understanding of their unique context, heritage, culture and identity.
- Teachers provide effective outdoor learning experiences. Children enjoy using playground spaces, role-play equipment and natural materials as a regular part of learning and play. Teachers plan engaging activities linked to the curriculum, such as scientific experiments. Recently, children planted vegetables in the garden which they plan to harvest and eat. These experiences impact positively on children's wellbeing, confidence and help to extend their

knowledge. As planned, teachers should explore ways to build and assess children's skills progressively within this context.

- Teachers have embedded agreed features of highly effective classroom practice and are now outlining these in a learning and teaching policy. This is supporting consistent high-quality teaching and learning across both classes. Teachers' instructions and explanations are clear. They share the purpose of learning well and help children to identify relevant connections with 'meta-skills', their wider lives and the world of work. Teachers skilfully summarise learning using plenary discussions. Teachers use questioning well to check understanding and to support children to develop higher-order thinking skills. Children are now ready to identify how they can be successful in their lessons more independently.
- Overall, teachers plan and provide lessons and activities that are well-matched to children's needs and abilities. Support for learning teachers provide useful advice and support. This helps ensure staff plan and implement well-considered interventions and resources. Support staff assist children very well with their learning in class and when providing valuable targeted support for groups and individuals. They are highly responsive and sensitive to each child's needs.
- Staff skilfully embed a range of digital technologies that enhance teaching and learning. They provide regular opportunities for children to develop their digital literacy across the curriculum. Children use a range of digital resources and applications to extend and share their learning, including programmable toys, coding and animation. A few children are 'Digital Leaders' providing helpful peer and school-wide support. Recently, a team of older children worked together on a STEM robotics project as part of an international tournament, winning first place for their region.
- Teachers use professional learning and national practice guidance effectively to enhance play-based learning for younger children. Children engage very well with the wide range of well-considered, attractive learning spaces and resources. These provide suitable challenge for differing ages and stages of development. Teachers respond thoughtfully to children's interests and plan a well-considered balance of child-led and adult-led activities and experiences. Older children engage in stimulating, open-ended challenges and enquiry-based learning experiences. These capture and sustain their interest well. They have regular opportunities to be creative and inventive. This helps them to apply their knowledge and practise new skills. As a result of highly effective play and enquiry experiences, children develop important transferable skills such as creativity and collaboration.
- Children find regular opportunities to peer and self-assess their work helpful. Teachers skilfully use formative assessment strategies to check children's understanding and confidence during lessons, such as traffic lighting, and visual signals. Throughout lessons, teachers give children constructive verbal feedback. They provide high-quality written commentary on children's work linked to key areas of learning. Teachers and children have regular 'learner conversations' and set and review learning targets. Most children are becoming confident discussing their next steps in learning for literacy and numeracy. A few children would benefit from reviewing progress towards their targets more regularly.
- The headteacher and teachers created a school assessment 'calendar' to inform practice. Staff use this well to plan a broad range of assessments across the session. The headteacher and staff gather and consider robust assessment information for each child in literacy and numeracy termly. This includes using standardised assessments diagnostically to understand children's strengths and identify any gaps in learning. Staff also use 'High Quality Assessment

tasks' to evidence children's challenge and application of learning across curriculum areas. Assessment information is used well to evaluate each child's progress in learning.

- The headteacher and staff have embedded strong, effective processes for moderating teaching, learning and assessment. They share and discuss standards regularly focusing on different aspects of children's learning, such as writing and mathematics. Teachers work well collaboratively as a school team and value experiences moderating with colleagues from their cluster school and wider area. As a result, teachers' understanding and professional judgements about children's achievement of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels are robust and accurate.
- Teachers plan together making informed use of progression pathways and CfE experiences and outcomes to build children's knowledge and skills. They consider national Benchmarks when planning assessment. The headteacher and staff track, monitor and discuss children's progress in literacy, numeracy and wellbeing at regular points. They record children's progress systematically and make considered predictions using a local authority tracking system. During tracking meetings, the headteacher and staff also plan interventions to provide further support and challenge. Teachers should explore and agree ways to show more clearly how they adapt their planning and approaches from the assessment information they gather and their ongoing evaluations of taught lessons. This should help to support all children to make the best possible progress.

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 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

- At the time of the inspection, the school roll comprised of a small number of children across P1 to P7. As a result, attainment and progress will be expressed in 'overall' statements, rather than for specific year groups or CfE levels.
- Overall, attainment and progress across the school in literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics is good. A few children are exceeding nationally expected levels.

Attainment in literacy and English

Listening and talking

- Younger children express ideas and thoughts with enthusiasm. They demonstrate their understanding by asking and answering questions. Older children contribute ideas confidently when working in pairs and groups. They listen carefully, explain their thinking and build on the ideas of others well. Across the school, children present to audiences using appropriate verbal and non-verbal techniques. They enjoy exploring Scots and Caithness dialects. A few children will benefit from further practice of turn-taking.

Reading

- Younger children recognise initial letters and letter sounds. They are becoming more confident using a range of strategies to attempt reading new, or less familiar words. As appropriate to their age and stage of development, most children read well with growing fluency and expression. There is a school-wide culture of reading for enjoyment. Children share their preference for authors or the genre of books they enjoy. Older children require further practice exploring and discussing figurative language.

Writing

- Children write successfully for a variety of purposes across genres, such as reports, poetry and character descriptions. As they move through the school most children are developing their writing skills to include a wider range of punctuation, connectives and interesting openings. They will benefit from continued regular writing practice for real-life audiences and for different purposes across the curriculum.

Attainment in numeracy and mathematics

Number, money and measure

- Younger children identify, recognise and order numbers accurately. They can identify missing numbers in a sequence and count backwards or forwards from a given number. Older children demonstrate a sound understanding of place value and rounding. Across the school, when adding and subtracting children select from an increasing range of known strategies and justify their choice. Children transfer their numeracy skills well when working

with measure. They are becoming more confident working out change when working with money. Older children need to revisit and practise learning in fractions, decimals and percentages. All children will benefit from applying their numeracy skills within real-life, relevant problems, including practising multi-step calculations.

Shape, position and movement

- Children name and identify 2D shapes and 3D objects appropriate to their stage of learning with confidence. Older children demonstrate a sound understanding of compass points and coordinates. They are less confident working with angles.

Information handling

- Children use their counting skills well to understand pictograms and simple charts. They understand the concept of most and least popular. Younger children are confident using tallies to gather responses and older children are familiar with frequency tables. Children would benefit from further regular practice in collecting, displaying and discussing data in a variety of interesting ways, including using digital technology.

Attainment over time

- The headteacher records and monitors attainment effectively over time using a local authority system. Overall, children make a strong start to early level and progress well as they move through the school. Working together, staff identified attainment and progress in writing as a priority for improvement. This session, they are adapting and improving approaches to the teaching and assessment of writing. These changes are beginning to positively impact on the quality of children's writing and their progress. Staff know each individual child's progress and attainment over time in detail. School data shows when children face barriers to their learning, they make steady progress in their targeted areas of support. The headteacher and staff now need to work together to identify specific common gaps across children's learning and skills in literacy and numeracy. They should use this information to plan the most relevant targeted improvement actions that will support children to make further progress and raise attainment.
- In June 2024, the school average attendance figure was 93.7% which is above the national average. This has slightly increased from 93.4% in June 2023. The headteacher implements thorough procedures for monitoring, recording and supporting attendance following local authority guidance. Staff use of a range of supportive strategies to help children return to school following absence. Where required, the headteacher and staff use part-time timetables in a considered and well-managed way in line with national guidance. These effective and collaborative approaches are supporting children and families well.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Children are very proud of their own and others' achievements. Staff celebrate these well through assemblies and school displays. Children share achievements from school experiences, such as poetry presentations and music tuition, and from their home life. Children work very well together and in collaboration with staff, partners and families to achieve nationally accredited awards for their school. For example, in rights-based learning, reading and sports and participation. All children develop as caring citizens. They regularly support others through fundraising events, such as for national charities. Primary 7 children demonstrate confidence, independence and teamworking skills on an annual summer residential trip they attend with peers from their cluster school.
- The headteacher records each child's participation in achievement activities. She uses this information very well to monitor achievement across the school. As a result, staff plan and

provide the most appropriate experiences and ensure that no child misses out. Staff should now support children to discuss and make links between their achievements and the skills they are developing.

Equity for all learners

- The headteacher and staff have a deep understanding of the socio-economic context of the school and community. They make effective use of a range of information to ensure children facing potential barriers to their learning receive well-considered targeted support using Pupil Equity Funding (PEF). This year, PEF is being used to enhance outdoor experiences to support children's learning and wellbeing. Staff can evidence children's positive engagement in these activities. The headteacher and staff should develop measures and approaches to monitor progress of children receiving targeted support through PEF more closely. This information will help staff to ensure supports are accelerating progress and improving outcomes for children.
- The headteacher and staff are committed to providing activities and experiences to overcome challenges faced by children and families in rural communities. They consider ways to tackle issues such as affordable transport, travel times and social isolation. For example, they provide lunch clubs rather than after school as these are more accessible. Funding and grants sourced by the Parent Council are used to provide transport for excursions and experiences for children. The headteacher has also worked closely with the Parent Council to reduce the cost of the school day for families and agreed strategies are outlined in a school policy. As a result of this work, children and families feel included and supported.

Other relevant evidence

- Children receive their entitlement to two hours high-quality physical education (PE) each week and make use of indoor and outside facilities. Staff and sports partners support children very well to develop their physical activity, PE skills, confidence and resilience through clubs and new sporting activities, such as surfing. Important to the school's coastal context, all children are taught swimming. By pairing up with their cluster school, older children have been able to form football and netball teams. This is a new development and a source of pride. Children are now participating and achieving success in festivals and tournaments.
- The headteacher provides information for parents on PEF spending and shares how children benefit. Staff should continue to explore sensitive ways to engage parents in helping to shape how PEF is used at the school.
- Children learn French across the school. They also explore Scots through books, poems and performances as part of the 1 + 2 modern languages programme. Supported by local partners and organisations, children also hear and learn about music, song and poetry in Caithness dialect and Gaelic. These experiences help to build their appreciation for their local culture and heritage.

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.