

Summarised inspection findings

Castle Kennedy Primary School

Dumfries and Galloway Council

23 January 2024

Key contextual information

Castle Kennedy Primary School is a small, rural school situated in the village of Castle Kennedy, three miles from Stranraer. At the time of the inspection, the school roll of 36 children were being taught across two multi-composite classes. Almost all children live in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) deciles three and four. Attendance is in line with the national average.

The headteacher has been in post since January 2022. He has overall leadership responsibility for both Castle Kennedy Primary School and Glenluce Primary School. The school partnership was established in August 2016. Prior to becoming headteacher of the partnership, he was deputy headteacher across the partnership. The headteacher is supported by two principal teachers across the partnership. Both principal teachers are class committed apart from half a day per week.

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

- Since the headteacher took up post, he has created successfully a supportive culture with a very strong focus on developing positive relationships between all staff and children. Staff, children, parents and partners across the school community recognise and value the positive impact the headteacher has had on the ethos of the school. The values of 'respect, kindness, honesty, inclusion and responsibility' are highly visible throughout the school. The headteacher and staff demonstrate these very well throughout their work. Staff celebrate children demonstrating the values through house points and awards. Children feel valued and respected by the caring, positive relationships they have with all adults and each other in school. Parents value the staff's caring approach and commitment to ensuring the school is at the heart of the community.
- Across the school, all staff are continuing to improve outcomes for all children. Staff know children and families very well and understand their individual needs. All staff are knowledgeable about the rural context of the school and the opportunities and challenges this presents for families and children's learning and achievement. The headteacher has worked extensively to create a positive environment based of respectful relationships and collaboration that supports staff to improve their practice to meet the wellbeing needs of all children. Staff now need to focus on raising attainment in literacy and numeracy. Positively, all staff recognise appropriately the need to further improve the quality and consistency of learning and teaching across the school. The headteacher, staff and children should work together to develop an agreed learning, teaching and assessment standard.
- Most teachers feel actively involved in the school's ongoing self-evaluation process to inform improvement. They have opportunities to participate in activities to agree the priorities for the school. However, the strategic analysis of self-evaluation evidence is not yet sufficiently robust. The headteacher should improve self-evaluation processes, drawing on a range of evidence

more regularly. This should make sure that the identified priorities reflect accurately the school's current context. It is important to establish how the success of planned actions will be measured and evaluated. The headteacher should address this to help guide the strategic direction and pace of change more effectively. Reviewing the strategic and operational remits of senior leaders should support them to have a sharper focus on key priorities including improving the quality of learning, teaching and assessment across the school.

- As part of quality assurance processes the headteacher undertakes annual classroom observations and meets with staff termly to review children's progress. The headteacher has correctly identified the need to establish a more robust approach to quality assurance. This should include regular class observations, monitoring of children's work and discussions with children about their learning and progress. The headteacher should use evidence gathered through quality assurance activities to support greater consistency in learning and teaching approaches used across the school.
- All staff work well as a team. The headteacher encourages shared leadership successfully and is supported ably by the principal teacher. He encourages all staff to share their professional learning and to make best use of their skills and interests. The headteacher supports all teachers to engage with annual staff professional reviews. Teachers link their personal development plans to the General Teaching Council for Scotland standards and the school improvement plan. All teachers take part in professional learning including how to use digital technology to enhance learning and teaching and approaches to writing. This supports the implementation of aspects of the school improvement plan, their own personal development needs and improves children's experiences across the school. All staff demonstrate a strong commitment to lead improvement and develop their practice. The headteacher now needs to ensure that collaborative leadership roles result in improved quality of learning and teaching and raised attainment in literacy and numeracy.
- Most children feel included in decisions that are important to them. All children are part of school committees and groups that make positive contributions to the life and ethos of the school. These include pupil council, house captains, and Eco group. Children talk positively about aspects of school life they have improved, including improving their playground. Children enjoy undertaking leadership roles. With support, they could become more involved in improving learning and teaching across the school using accessible approaches in for example 'How good is OUR school?'
- Currently, Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) is used to pay for additional staffing and resources to provide a range of universal and targeted interventions. An additional teacher delivers regular outdoor learning experiences for all children, supporting their emotional and social wellbeing. Support staff provide literacy and numeracy interventions for identified children. The headteacher should review the impact of the universal intervention in relation to closing the poverty related attainment gap in literacy and numeracy for identified children. The headteacher should ensure the whole school community including parents and children are involved in planning how the school's PEF will be used.

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

- There is a very welcoming and inclusive ethos at Castle Kennedy Primary School. The ethos and culture of the school reflects the school's values of honesty, ambition, respect and kindness. These values are underpinned by children's increasing understanding of their rights. Staff reinforce the values and children's rights through their teaching. Charters are displayed in each class and around the school including the dinner hall and playground. Wall displays highlight learning about rights and sustainability. As a result, positive, respectful relationships are evident across the school. Most children interact appropriately and positively when they work with each other in pairs and small groups.
- Most children enjoy learning at school and engage well in the wide range of learning experiences on offer. Across the school, staff create bright, attractive, and well-organised learning environments. Displays are well presented and used by children to support learning. Staff make good use of the school grounds and the local environment to motivate children. As planned, teachers should now develop a progressive outdoor learning framework. This should support children to build on, extend and apply similar skills developed at previous stages.
- In almost all lessons, teachers share the purpose of learning and help children to make connections between previous and current learning. Teachers' explanations and instructions are clear, and most children understand what is expected of them. A next step is for children and teachers to work together to identify how children can be successful in their learning. Teachers use questioning well to check children's knowledge and understanding. In a few lessons, teachers make effective use of questions to extend children's reflections on their learning and to develop higher-order thinking skills. As identified, teachers now need to build on this effective practice and use these techniques more consistently across the school.
- In most lessons, teachers use oral feedback to support children in their learning. In a minority of lessons, they use of self and peer assessment and written feedback effectively to support children's next steps. Teachers write comments and give feedback in jotters which children value. However, the quality of this feedback is variable. Teachers should work together to ensure approaches to written feedback are of a consistent high quality.
- Teachers support children to set targets for literacy, numeracy, and health and wellbeing twice a year. This provides children with opportunities to discuss their strengths and what they need to do to improve. Staff should continue to support children to have a clear understanding of their own specific targets to enable them to reflect on their progress. Children would benefit from revisiting and setting their targets more regularly.
- Overall, the quality of teaching and the consistency of children's experiences is variable across the school. In the majority of lessons, learning is appropriately matched to most children's needs however, the pace of learning is too slow, particularly across first level. Staff should

ensure a brisk pace of learning and that learning is set at the right level of difficulty for all children. A minority of children are capable of achieving more and teachers should increase the level of challenge and quality of learning experience for them. There is a need to develop a shared understanding of the features of high-quality learning and teaching and improve the consistency of learners' experiences across the school.

- Teachers working at early level are beginning to develop their understanding of play pedagogy. They have reviewed the learning environment to provide improved learning spaces, including construction and role play areas. Children are beginning to use their imagination skills and develop their creativity when using these areas. Staff's ongoing engagement with professional and collaborative learning should support the development of play further. This should improve the quality of adult interactions to ensure learning is motivating and meaningful. In addition, it should support staff to ensure the range of learning experiences children engage in are appropriate to their stage of development and meet their learning needs.
- Teachers use digital technology, such as interactive whiteboards, successfully to support class lessons. All children have access to an individual digital device and use it regularly as an integral part of their daily learning experiences. Children's digital literacy is increasing as a result. Children use devices confidently to play games to reinforce learning, undertake research and for word processing.
- Teachers use a range of assessment data to measure the progress children are making in literacy and numeracy. This includes Scottish National Standardised Assessments, other standardised assessments and ongoing class assessments. There is a lack of consistency in the use of assessments to support teachers' professional judgements throughout the school. The headteacher and teachers should review assessment approaches to develop a more consistent and robust approach to gathering evidence of children's progress across the school. This would support teachers in planning for progression in learning for different cohorts and groups of learners.
- All teachers take part in moderation activities with colleagues from other schools. This collaboration is leading to teachers having a shared understanding of progression within and across Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels. It is also improving teachers' confidence when making professional judgements about children's progress in learning. The headteacher recognises the need to offer teachers more frequent opportunities to engage in moderation activities within and outwith the school. This will enable teachers to learn with and from each other, develop collaborative approaches and support the ongoing improvement priorities of the school.
- Across the school, staff create an annual overview of key learning, which is then planned in more detail on a termly basis. To inform this planning, teachers use a range of learning pathways, including those developed by the school, cluster schools and the local authority. Staff engage in regular planning discussions with their stage partners across the partnership. Although aspects of planning take account of children's age and stage of development, these are not always evident in short-term planning. Approaches to planning across the school are inconsistent. The headteacher and staff identify correctly the need to further improve their approaches to planning learning across literacy and numeracy. There is a need to ensure a more robust approach to planning progressive learning experiences which build on children's prior learning.
- The headteacher meets with staff for pupil progress and tracking meetings three times a year. They discuss the progress of individual children in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing and make predictions of children's projected levels of attainment. During these meetings, they identify children who require support individually or in small groups. Children receive targeted

support as required from support assistants to practise their literacy and numeracy skills. It is now important for staff to regularly measure and track how well interventions are reducing the poverty related attainment gap.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- Teachers use progression pathways for all of curriculum areas. These pathways take account of CfE experiences and outcomes and the national benchmarks. They use three-year rolling programmes to support annual planning for a few areas of the curriculum including health and wellbeing, social studies, and science. These overviews support teachers to plan learning in contexts and topics with guidance on coverage of experiences and outcomes. These overviews are also designed to enable children to build on prior learning as they move through the school. Senior leaders and teachers should review progression pathways for literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics to support children further in raising their attainment. This will help teachers to ensure planned experiences build on children's prior learning and skills, and support progression for all children.
- Teachers plan learning for sustainability well through learning which links across different subjects. Children are given opportunities for personalisation and choice by planning focus weeks and charity work for class and whole school learning. Children have opportunities to explore the world of work through career fairs and visitors to the school. Staff should make use of local and national guidance, including the 'Career Education Standard (3-18)' to develop a framework to ensure children are developing skills for learning, life and work progressively.
- Outdoor learning is an increasing feature across the school. Children are motivated by this and engage well. They practise skills in problem solving, teamwork and communication when learning outdoors. In addition, they are developing their confidence and show respect of their environment. As identified, senior leaders should work with teachers to develop a policy to ensure a more consistent, progressive approach to outdoor learning that builds on children's prior learning and skills.
- All children receive two hours of quality physical education each week. Teachers make good use of indoor and outdoor spaces to deliver a progressive programme of physical education. They work with partners to identify opportunities to increase engagement and achievement in physical activities and sport.
- Across the school children receive their entitlement to 1+2 modern languages. Teachers deliver French progressively across the school. Older children learn Spanish.
- Children in all classes receive regular religious education and teachers follow guidelines for religious observance.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- Almost all parents feel that staff treat their child fairly and with respect. They feel comfortable approaching senior leaders with any worries or concerns and are confident that these will be treated seriously and actioned promptly. Parents comment very positively on the caring, approachable and supportive school staff team. Almost all parents report their child feels safe at school and is treated fairly and with respect.
- Almost all parents feel that the school helps their child to develop their confidence. Parents say that they are kept well-informed about the work of the school and are encouraged to share their views to support school improvement. As a result almost all parents are satisfied with the school, they say the school is led and managed well.
- Most parents report they receive helpful, timeous information about how their child is progressing. Parents receive two written reports and are offered two meetings with teachers each year. This provides opportunities for parents to hear about their own children's progress and achievements in learning.
- Parents are positive about activities provided by the school where they learn together with their child.
- The Parent Council is supportive of the school and is keen to encourage more parents to become involved with the Parent Council. They work well with community partners to help raise funds to support the work of the school. Successful community events include a family bingo night.

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.

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

- The headteacher and all staff place high importance on supporting and improving the wellbeing of children and their families. They work hard to create a nurturing, inclusive environment. Respectful and positive relationships are evident across the school. Almost all children report that they feel safe in school. Almost all children feel listened to and cared for. They can identify a trusted adult in school and are confident they can go to them if they are worried or upset. They share how well everyone looks after each other. They are happy and secure at school as a result.
- Across the school, most children play together very well in the playground. Older children support and organise games for the younger children. This is helping all children across the school to build positive respectful relationships with each other. All children and parents report the school deals appropriately with bullying or that they have never experienced bullying.
- Children demonstrate the school's values well. Staff use the values successfully to support children's positive relationships and attitudes to school life. Staff and children celebrate wider achievements within assemblies and children who have demonstrated the values well receive 'star learner' certificates. Children respond positively to these approaches and are very proud of their collective and individual achievements.
- Children across the school have a very strong understanding of children's rights. The school has received a gold national award for their work on children's rights. Children talk confidently about their rights and what they mean for themselves and others. The headteacher leads weekly assemblies that focus on health and wellbeing. This approach provides children with regular opportunities to learn about their rights, local and global issues, and the wellbeing indicators. All children answer questions directly linked to the wellbeing indicators two times per year. Teachers and senior leaders review and monitor all responses to the wellbeing questions. This helps staff to understand better the wellbeing needs of individual children and plan the health and wellbeing curriculum. Staff ensure children who have identified wellbeing needs are supported fully with timely interventions. Robust processes to engage children in reflecting on their wellbeing ensures that almost all children feel safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible and included in school.
- Teachers are confident in planning wellbeing learning experiences for children and access support from key partners including, community police officers and the fire service. This is leading to children having a very good understanding about what they need to do to keep healthy and safe. They are very aware of keeping safe online, safety on Bonfire night and the importance of different types of food to keep healthy. Children talk confidently about how adults in school encourage them to take part in physical activities. These activities include rugby, badminton and learning outdoors. Children engage in forest school work which supports them

to build resilience and self-esteem. Children discuss knowledgeably how taking part in outdoor learning helps them to develop their cooperative, problem-solving and leadership skills.

- All children have opportunities to support peers to improve their wellbeing. They are involved in pupil groups, including Rights Respecting Schools Ambassadors and Junior Road Safety Officers. Children also participate in programmes such as Eco-Schools Scotland. Children feel respected and responsible, as a result. Staff should continue to increase opportunities for children to lead on aspects of wellbeing, inclusion and equality.
- All staff understand fully and meet their statutory responsibilities in relation to wellbeing, equality and inclusion. Staff are aware of their responsibilities in relation to safeguarding and keeping children safe. All staff have completed training in line with their responsibilities and codes of practice. The headteacher and staff understand all children's individual needs. Staff develop an individualised educational plan for children who require them. The headteacher should work with teachers to improve the quality of targets within individual education plans. The targets should clearly identify the steps to be taken to help a child who requires additional support to achieve specified learning outcomes. This should be reviewed regularly in order to measure the progress children who require additional support are making in their learning.
- The headteacher monitors the attendance of children. Support and advice is given to families about how to improve their child's attendance, where necessary. Almost all parents indicate that children are eager and keen to attend school.
- Children experience a range of learning activities which recognise and celebrate diversity through assemblies and class activities. For example, children learn about Diwali and other festivals as they occur through the school year. The school provides a place for community members to meet regularly including a 'tots' group. Children organise craft activities, play games and read stories to the younger children. Children value time with members of the community. They recognise that this helps to develop their organisational and communication skills. Children talk well about the importance of treating others with respect and celebrating differences. They are developing a sense of what discrimination is and how to challenge it.
- Staff work effectively with colleagues to support children as they come to school from early years settings or move on to secondary school. Children requiring additional support benefit from enhanced transition arrangements during periods of transition. Children who have joined the school during their primary years speak very positively about the support they receive from staff and other children. This has helped them settle and feel part of the school community.
- PEF is used to increase the school's staffing allocation and digital resources. Increased teaching hours supports the universal delivery of forest school work and targeted support for learning. Additional support staff provide targeted literacy and numeracy support for identified children. The headteacher should realign the PEF plan to ensure interventions focus fully on helping identified children make appropriate progress in literacy and numeracy.

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

- Due to the small size of the school roll, overall statements about attainment and progress will be made, rather than for specific year groups or CfE levels.
- Overall, the majority of children are attaining expected levels of attainment in literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics. Attainment is strongest in listening and talking. Children are making satisfactory progress from their prior levels of attainment, but a minority of children are capable of making better progress. Children's attainment is strong at early level but gaps in their understanding arise as they move through first level into second level. By the end of second level, the majority of children are back on track to achieve expected levels of attainment. At the middle stages, there is a need to provide greater pace and challenge in learning to raise children's level of attainment.
- Children requiring additional support in their learning are making satisfactory progress towards individual targets.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, children are making satisfactory progress in reading and writing. Most children are making good progress in listening and talking. A minority of children are capable of making even better progress.

Listening and talking

- Most children listen well and articulate their thoughts and opinions confidently, appropriate to their age and stage. Younger children listen to each other respectfully as they play and learn in small groups. Older children take turns appropriately during class and group discussions. They build successfully on one another's answers and ask relevant questions to clarify their understanding. Across the school children require further support to identify the features required when presenting to others and opportunities to put these skills into practice.

Reading

- Younger children are developing their knowledge of initial sounds well. They now need to use this knowledge to read three letter words. As children progress through the school, the majority of children apply their knowledge of words well to decode new and unfamiliar words. At the upper stages, the majority of children read aloud fluently. They use the school library and online programmes to access a range of fiction and non-fiction books. At the upper stages, children are at the early stages of identifying techniques authors use to engage readers, for example, word choice and emotive language. A few children across the school are capable of greater progress in reading. At the early level there is the need to review approaches and pace to teaching children to read with fluency.

Writing

- Across the school, children write for a range of purposes and explore different genres including personal writing, stories and information leaflets. Younger children are developing confidence in forming letters correctly. They attempt to write as they engage in imaginative play, in the classroom. They now need supported to use their knowledge of letters to write simple words. Children in the middle stages sequence stories successfully and consider interesting ways to begin sentences. They need to continue to develop spelling strategies to support them when spelling unfamiliar words. Older children link sentences using a range of conjunctions and use paragraphs well to separate thoughts and ideas. Children would benefit from further support to confidently use a range of language techniques to engage the reader, for example, simile, metaphor and onomatopoeia. Children across the middle and upper stages need further opportunities to write extended pieces of writing.
- Across the school, teachers are implementing new approaches to writing this session. This should increase children's engagement and confidence in writing and impact positively on attainment.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, the majority of children are making appropriate progress in numeracy. A minority of children are capable of making even better progress. Children working at the middle stages of the school should be supported to develop their numeracy skills at a faster pace.

Number, money and measure

- Younger children can recognise and use numbers to 10 in their learning and in their play. They identify correctly the number before, the number after and missing numbers in a sequence within 10. Children working at the middle stages can read, write and order whole numbers to 100. They are less confident at adding and subtracting two-digit and three-digit numbers. Older children identify place value of numbers accurately and show confidence when rounding. They are less confident in carrying out simple calculations involving fractions, decimals and percentages. Younger children can name in sequence the days of the week. They are less confident about the months of year. Older children can read analogue and digital times appropriate to their age and stage of development. They are less confident at calculating the duration of activities. Children would benefit from further practice using a range of strategies to solve word and multi-step problems.

Shape, position and movement

- Across the school, children name and discuss confidently the properties of two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects appropriate to their age and stage. Younger children can create, copy and continue simple patterns. They need to develop their understanding of symmetry. Older children can describe angles using appropriate terminology, such as acute, obtuse and reflex. They are less confident in accurately measuring and drawing a range of angles.

Information handling

- Across the school, children use a range of charts and graphs to classify and sort information. Children interpret information from graphs to draw conclusions about data. Across the school, all children should be provided with further opportunities to apply their skills in data and analysis regularly in a wide range of real-life and rich contexts. At all stages, children would benefit from using digital technology to record, collect and display data.

Attainment over time

- Given the small school roll and changing cohorts of children each year, attainment over time is a varied picture. Overall, the majority of children make satisfactory progress in literacy and

numeracy. Senior leaders and teachers track the progress individual children are making in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Assessment processes are not yet sufficiently well developed. There should be a sharper focus on measuring more reliably the progress children are making towards their individual targets in literacy and numeracy.

- Senior leaders identify the need to review current approaches to the teaching of literacy and numeracy. The introduction of new approaches and resources for learning and teaching in literacy and numeracy should support an increased focus on raising attainment for all children across the school.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Staff recognise and celebrate children's achievements in class and at assemblies. Children receive house points, star learner certificates and awards linked to children's rights. These are helping to build children's confidence and self-esteem.
- All children have opportunities to contribute to the life and work of the school and local community. For example, children organised a community litter pick. All children are part of a school leadership group. Through these opportunities children are developing important skills including problem-solving, decision-making and effective communication. Children demonstrate their creativity and enterprising skills by organising and leading whole school events, such as coffee mornings and school fayres. Older children enjoy planning and leading clubs for younger children at lunchtimes. Children improve their physical fitness and teamwork through taking part in a range of clubs led by staff and partners. This includes playground rugby, football and badminton.
- As planned, staff should develop systems to track children's achievement and capture the skills they are developing. This will help to ensure that no child is at risk of missing out and that children's skills are developed progressively. It will also support children to identify their strengths, attributes and the contributions they make as respectful, responsible, global citizens.

Equity for all learners

- All staff have a clear understanding of the socio-economic and cultural context of the rural community. The headteacher ensures that financial constraints do not prevent any child from participating in the opportunities available. The headteacher uses funds raised in partnership with the Parent Council to ensure that all school trips and events are fully funded for all children.
- The headteacher uses PEF to provide a range of interventions both universally and on a targeted basis. The range of interventions are intended to support the health and wellbeing of children universally and raise attainment in reading, writing and numeracy for identified individuals. The headteacher is aware of the need to develop approaches to measure the impact of these funded interventions on closing the poverty-related attainment gap. This will support staff to make informed evaluations about how well universal and targeted approaches are accelerating progress for identified children.

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.