

Summarised inspection findings

Whitehills Primary School

Aberdeenshire Council

19 December 2023

Key contextual information

Whitehills Primary School is set within a coastal and rural location within the small fishing village of Whitehills, Banffshire, Aberdeenshire. The school roll is 129 children working across six classes. The headteacher has been in post for three and a half years. The school received £15,925 Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) this year, which has largely funded additional staffing to support universal and targeted interventions. Most children reside in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation decile 6. There have been no exclusions in recent years and attendance is above the national average.

The nursery was inspected jointly with the Care Inspectorate the week following the school inspection. The headteacher has overall responsibility for the nursery class. Daily responsibility is delegated to a peripatetic senior practitioner who shares her time with another Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) setting.

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

- All staff and children at Whitehills Primary School are very welcoming, friendly and proud of their school. All staff know children very well as individuals. There are nurturing and positive relationships between staff and children and between children. Children know they have a trusted adult they can talk to if they need to. This helps children to feel safe and cared for at school which supports them to engage successfully in learning. The headteacher, supported by the staff team, has created a positive learning environment which supports learners to achieve well in school.
- The headteacher and staff have embedded the school values of WAFFLE: Welcoming, Aspire, Friendly, Fun, Learning and Enthusiastic into everyday school life. Children understand the expectations and strive to do their best. They are developing an increasing understanding of their rights through class charters and learning linked to children's rights.
- In the majority of classes, teachers plan learning which meets the needs of most children well. However, this is not a consistent feature across the school. When learning is well matched to children's interests and is at the appropriate level, children engage very well in learning. They are confident, articulate and enthusiastic to learn. In the best examples, children have opportunities for choice in aspects of learning, for example, in the level of challenge they undertake in numeracy. Children select a task at the level they are confident to complete and regularly challenge themselves. If they need help, they can select a simpler task and are supported appropriately by the teacher. This is leading to an increase in children's confidence. As a result, children are developing a clearer understanding of their strengths and where they need more support. This effective approach should now be applied across the school.
- In most lessons, children understand the purpose of learning and how to be successful. In these lessons, teacher's explanations are clear, children understand the instructions and

participate well in learning. In a few classes, children have opportunities to co-construct success criteria. Children work individually, in pairs and in groups. However, in a minority of classes, teachers are missing opportunities for learning to be more creative and challenging for children. In a minority of lessons, the pace of learning is too slow.

- Teachers use questioning well to check for understanding. They should extend their questioning techniques to challenge children's thinking and provide children with a more active role in learning. A few teachers are beginning to provide opportunities for children to reflect on and make decisions about their learning. Children are highly motivated when they are supported to evaluate their learning and lead aspects of learning. This needs to be a consistent feature of learning and teaching across the school.
- In most lessons, there are too many interruptions to learning. Learning time needs to be maximised. As a next step, the headteacher and teachers should review the features of effective learning and teaching and agree a Whitehills learning and teaching approach. This will support a clear understanding of what high quality learning and teaching looks like at Whitehills. It will support all children to experience consistent high-quality learning and teaching across the school.
- Support staff and teachers provide children who require support with learning well-planned additional help, including effective literacy and numeracy interventions. Teachers and the headteacher regularly review the support children receive to ensure interventions are effective and children are making appropriate progress.
- Teachers use interactive white boards effectively to support learning. Children use digital devices well to develop their information technology (IT) skills and to support learning in literacy and numeracy. The headteacher and teachers should now ensure children experience a progressive digital programme across the school. This will allow children to develop their IT skills and use IT to enhance and enrich learning.
- Staff at early level continue to reflect on and improve their approaches to learning and teaching using play. Children have regular opportunities to engage in open-ended play. They demonstrate enjoyment and interest in their activities. Teachers provide activities designed to consolidate or extend specific aspects of learning in literacy and numeracy. Staff use the outdoors effectively to support children to be curious and make independent choices. A next step would be for staff across the early level to make further use of the national guidance, *Realising the Ambition: Being Me*, to continue to develop this work.
- Children at Whitehills Primary School have a rich environment for outdoor learning both in the playground and the local area. Teachers recognise the importance of outdoor learning in enriching children's learning experience and supporting their engagement in learning. All teachers plan regular high quality and child led outdoor learning experiences. Teachers should ensure they plan and record outdoor learning experiences in a progressive way. This will ensure children build on their skills as they move through school.
- Teachers are beginning to use a range of planned assessments in literacy and numeracy. Most teachers use information from standardised and diagnostic assessments to identify effectively gaps in children's learning. Teachers should now use the progression frameworks they have developed in literacy and numeracy to ensure assessment is an integral part of the planning process. The headteacher recognises the need to develop an agreed whole-school approach to assessing children's progress.
- Teachers provide helpful oral feedback to children on their effort and engagement with learning tasks. Across the school they support and provide children with opportunities for

self-assessment in writing lessons. Teachers should now support children to develop their skills in self and peer-assessment in all areas of the curriculum.

- Teachers plan children's learning termly. They make effective use of progression pathways in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Children are actively involved in identifying areas of interest. Staff recognise the need to review the curriculum rationale. They have started work to refresh the curriculum. This will help to provide progressive experiences across all curricular areas. It will support children to make progress across all aspects of learning and receive their full entitlement to Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) outcomes.
- Teachers and the headteacher meet regularly to track children's progress in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. During these robust meetings, they identify children who are not making expected progress and require additional support. Teachers and the headteacher review this information regularly and amend support accordingly.
- Teachers engage very well in moderation of writing with colleagues within the school. Across the school the focus on writing has provided shared expectations of standards. This is helping staff to become more confident in their professional judgements in literacy. As planned, staff should now engage in moderation activities across other areas of curriculum. Re-establishing moderation with local schools will also support teachers to develop a stronger understanding of progress within and across a CfE level.

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

This indicator focuses on the school's success in achieving the best possible outcomes for all learners. Success is measured in attainment across all areas of the curriculum and through the school's ability to demonstrate learners' achievements in relation to skills and attributes. Continuous improvement or sustained high standards over time is a key feature of this indicator. The themes are:

- attainment in literacy and numeracy
- attainment over time
- overall quality of learners' achievement
- equity for all learners

Attainment in literacy and numeracy

- Overall attainment in literacy and numeracy across the school is good. In June 2023, most children at P1 achieved the expected CfE levels in reading, writing, listening and talking, and numeracy. At P4, the majority of children achieved expected CfE levels in listening and talking and numeracy and just under half achieved expected CfE levels in reading and writing. Most children at P7 achieved the expected CfE levels in reading, listening and talking and numeracy and the majority achieved expected levels in writing.
- Most children who require support with learning are making good progress towards their own targets. A few are on track to achieve expected CfE levels.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, most children are making good progress against prior levels of attainment in literacy and English.

Listening and talking

- Children who have achieved early level follow instructions well and are attentive when listening to a story. Most children contribute well to discussions. Almost all children at first and second level communicate their ideas to convey information confidently. They listen and respond appropriately to others in group discussions. A few children require support to build on the opinions and views of others during group work.

Reading

- Children who have achieved early level use their knowledge of sounds to decode unfamiliar words. Children at first level confidently read aloud a familiar text and most accurately answer literal and inferential questions about a text. Almost all children at second level read with fluency, understanding and expression. Most children describe their preferences for texts and authors. Children across the school now need to read for pleasure and explore a wider range of texts more regularly. This should deepen and extend their knowledge and understanding of their own reading preferences and increase their enjoyment of reading.

Writing

- Children who have achieved early level write at least one sentence independently and attempt to use knowledge of sounds to spell familiar words correctly. Children at first level write detailed imaginative stories using a range of vocabulary to engage the reader. At second level, most children write an extended piece of writing using paragraphs to separate thoughts and ideas. Across the school, children should now have more regular opportunities to write for different purposes and audiences. They also need to apply writing skills across different curricular areas.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, children's progress in numeracy and mathematics is good.

Number, money and measure

- Children who achieved early level confidently count forwards and backwards to 20 and beyond. They double numbers within 10 and answer simple addition and subtraction problems. They have a good understanding of how to measure length, weight and capacity using non-standard units. They would benefit from revising learning in money. Most children who have achieved first level round numbers confidently to the nearest 10 and 100. A few children can round to the nearest 1000. Most children have a good understanding of place value. They are beginning to explain strategies used to solve a problem. They need to improve further speed and accuracy in mental calculations. At second level, most children demonstrate confidently their understanding of place value to one million. They round whole numbers and decimal numbers ably and explain their answers. Children at first and second level need further practice at calculating addition and subtraction using a written method.

Shape, position and movement

- Children who have achieved early and first level recognise and describe two-dimensional (2D) shapes and three-dimensional (3D) objects. At first level, children describe the properties of common 2D shapes and 3D objects. At second level, children are developing their understanding of 3D objects and their nets. They understand the terms diameter, radius and circumference of a circle. Children at first and second level should revisit learning on angles.

Information handling

- At early level, children use a simple graph to answer questions, for example, the most popular pet. At first level, they understand why a graph is useful to display information and how to use it to answer questions. At second level, children use digital technology to create graphs. They use these graphs to answer a range of questions and draw conclusions.

Attainment over time

- The headteacher has reviewed data going back over six years. She meets regularly with teachers to review attainment of all children. These robust meetings ensure children who are not making expected progress are identified for and receive additional support. The headteacher has supported teachers in their use of data. Regular attainment meetings, alongside assessments, have increased teachers' confidence in the use of data. This is ensuring most children make good progress in learning, particularly in literacy and numeracy.
- The impact of the pandemic and barriers to learning have had a significant impact on children's attainment for those working at the end of first level and start of second level. Staff recognise this and plan additional support and interventions to address this. Staff need to review the progress of this group regularly to ensure interventions are effective in closing gaps in learning and accelerating progress for these children.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Children's achievements are celebrated at regular assemblies and shared with parents. These achievements are linked to the school values. This is developing children's awareness of the skills they are acquiring. For example, improving their confidence in sharing their views and contributing effectively in class discussions. Across the school children benefit from a range of trips, visits and clubs. A playground improvement group, led by children, successfully consults with the whole school to gather children's ideas. They are improving the playground by linking with local groups and businesses. A group of P6 and P7 children have taken part in exchange visits with a local school to evaluate their learning experiences. As a result, the children are

involved in making decisions about the life of the school. Staff plan to extend this innovative project to involve more children in leading aspects of self-evaluation and school improvement.

- Staff are at an early stage of tracking children's participation in clubs and involvement in leadership roles. They should continue to develop systems to identify and support children who may be at risk from missing out. Staff should support children to identify the skills they develop through participation in wider achievement activities.

Equity for all learners

- The staff team have a very good knowledge of children and families and the challenges they face. They are committed to ensuring no child misses out on events and trips due to the cost of the school day. They sensitively support children and families to ensure costs are minimised and supports are in place as needed.
- The headteacher uses Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) for additional staffing to support children through interventions, including access to nurture. Children are benefiting from these initiatives, for example, they develop skills to manage their emotions, which support them in class and in their interactions outside school. The headteacher should review the impact of these initiatives with an increased focus on children's progress in learning. This will help to determine if interventions are effectively helping children adversely affected by their circumstances to make accelerated progress in learning.

Other relevant evidence

- Children access a well-stocked library space and class libraries.
- Children access two hours of high-quality physical education each week.
- Currently all children do not receive their full entitlements to the curriculum. For example, all children do not receive their entitlement to an additional language. Staff should review the curriculum entitlements of all children.
- The headteacher communicates school improvement plans, including planning for PEF spending, with parents. Parents and children have opportunities to share their views on school priorities.

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.