

Summarised inspection findings

Tongue Primary School

The Highland Council

6 June 2023

Key contextual information

Tongue Primary School is in the village of Tongue on the north-west coast of Sutherland. Tongue Primary School and Nursery Class are part of the North Coast Campus. The campus headteacher has overall responsibility for Farr High School, Farr Primary School, Melvich Primary School, Tongue Primary School and the nursery settings at each of the primary schools. The schools are not located close to one another, with their joint catchment covering a vast geographical area.

Tongue Primary School has the support of a depute headteacher (0.5) who is also a principal teacher (0.5). The DHT also has responsibility for Farr Primary and Tongue Nursery Class. The DHT is in Tongue Primary School, three days each week. There is also another principal teacher (0.5). The headteacher and DHT provide significant cover across the campus for unfilled teaching posts.

Tongue Primary School currently has 24 children on the roll. This session there are no children in Primary 1. Children are organised into two multi-composite classes.

1.3 Leadership of change

good

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 campus headteacher, depute headteacher and staff worked well together to manage the challenges they faced during the COVID-19 pandemic. They provided effective support to children and families during periods of remote learning. Staff prioritised rightly children's wellbeing last session when the school buildings reopened. As a result, children are happy, secure and settled at school.
- Senior leaders work effectively together to mitigate the impact of significant, long-term issues. These issues relate to providing cover for vacant staff posts across the joint campus. Their determination and resilience have limited any detrimental impact on children. Both the headteacher of the campus and the 0.5 DHT at Tongue Primary School have been class committed for a significant amount of time each week. They have demonstrated strong leadership which motivates and inspires others. Together with the effective support of the 0.5 principal teacher, they have maintained an effective focus on improving outcomes for children at Tongue Primary School.
- This session senior leaders, together with children, have started to review the school vision, values and aims. Children highlight how important it is for their values to reflect their school accurately. Children are clear about the key characteristics of their school. They identify respect, including everyone and everyone being given the chance to do their best. They know their school well. Staff should highlight to children the central role values play in the life and work of the school. Senior leaders aim for the school community to have greater ownership of

the school values. Their planned next step is to give them all, the opportunity to contribute meaningfully to this review.

- Senior leaders have guided the direction and pace of change effectively, given the constraints of time available to them. They prioritise areas of improvement accurately. They acknowledge that the pace of change has been impeded by circumstances beyond their control. They have focused on a small number of important priorities. Senior leaders use information generated from quality assurance activities and the views of staff to shape improvement priorities using *How good is our school?* 4th edition. All staff value and take account of children's contributions to school improvement. They ask children to reflect on what is working well and consider what changes they would like to see. They should continue to develop children's role of contributing to improvements.
- Across the school, staff are dedicated to supporting all children to achieve success. They know children and families well and understand their individual needs. They place high importance on supporting the social and emotional needs of children and have created a welcoming environment where all are valued. All staff are knowledgeable about the rural context and the opportunities and challenges this presents for families and children's learning and achievement.
- The headteacher places importance on building capacity for improvement. She recognises this is key to help overcome ongoing staffing challenges, brought about by the rural location of the joint campus. All staff work effectively together as a small team. The headteacher encourages successfully, shared leadership and is supported ably by the DHT. They use professional review and development well to support staff to develop professionally. All staff lead an aspect of school improvement, which reinforces staff's shared responsibility for improving children's outcomes.
- The headteacher strives to provide opportunities for collaborative working with the other schools in the campus. The headteacher ensured that this continued, despite the challenges of the pandemic. Staff across the campus engaged effectively in moderation activities using a virtual platform. Staff value opportunities to learn from one another about improving outcomes for children.
- All children are growing in confidence through developing their own leadership skills. They are members of the eco group, pupil council and have the opportunity to be digital leaders. They value opportunities to share their views about their school and local community. Staff should continue to develop further opportunities for children to lead independently.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

good

This indicator focuses on ensuring high-quality learning experiences for all children and young people. It highlights the importance of highly-skilled staff who work with children, young people and others to ensure learning is motivating and meaningful. Effective use of assessment by staff and learners ensures children and young people maximise their successes and achievements. The themes are:

- learning and engagement
- quality of teaching
- effective use of assessment
- planning, tracking and monitoring

- Staff have created a positive, supportive learning environment. All children are welcoming, polite, and considerate towards each other, adults in school and visitors. They benefit from a nurturing, inclusive ethos. All staff have a keen focus on the care and welfare of all children. They know children and families well. All children are respectful and enthusiastic learners. They are proud of their school and talk knowledgeably about their learning.
- All children are motivated to learn and engage positively with planned learning activities. They interact easily with one another and staff. Almost all children work ably together in different groupings. They support each other well across the range of ages in each class. Across the school children enjoy being able to make choices about what they learn. They report that they learn better when they are interested in the context for learning. Most children work well independently when teachers match learning effectively to children's needs. Teachers should consider increasing opportunities for children to lead their learning.
- Children develop confidence and a sense of responsibility through contributing effectively to school life and their local community. All children are members of the eco group. They are proud of the green flag awarded for their work focusing on litter and waste in the community and biodiversity. Staff use the attractive, rural environment effectively to support and enhance children's learning.
- In most lessons teachers share the purpose of learning effectively with children. Most children are able to talk about what they learn during most lessons. Teachers provide clear explanations and instructions and help children understand how to be successful. In most lessons teachers encourage children to review their learning against agreed measures of success throughout the lesson. They provide valuable time at the end of the lesson for children to review their learning. Children self and peer assess writing activities successfully. This is helping children to improve their writing and grow as independent learners. The majority of children talk confidently about their literacy and numeracy targets and the progress they are making. They say that targets help them recognise what they need to improve. They also recognise their strengths and when they have overtaken a target. Most lessons are set at the right level of difficulty for individual children. A few children would like more challenge in their work.
- Children use electronic tablets confidently in class to access online learning platforms and games. They are beginning to record their learning and progress successfully by taking photographs to share with their parents on an online platform. Older children highlight the support they get from Dounreay power plant apprentices to develop their understanding of coding and programming.

- Teachers use a range of assessment evidence to support their judgements about children's progress and identify next steps. This includes standardised and summative assessment and a few planned, high-quality assessment pieces. It is evident that children, parents and teachers reflect effectively on clear measures of success for these assessments. These reflections help inform children's next steps in learning. Teachers should seek to improve further the body of evidence used to support assessment judgements, by building on this approach.
- Teachers work well together with campus colleagues on moderation activities, most recently with a focus on writing. Moderation activity, which continued virtually during the pandemic, helps them agree shared standards of what children can achieve. Teachers should use National Benchmarks more to plan assessment and identify the next steps in children's learning. The quality of teachers' judgements would be strengthened further by increasing opportunities for children to use skills in new and unfamiliar situations. The location and rich environment provide a wealth of opportunities for children to do this.
- Teachers use progression pathways for literacy and numeracy effectively. This ensures they build on children's prior learning and there are no gaps in their learning in these curriculum areas. Teachers plan contexts for learning well to meet the needs of the multi-composite classes. They respond positively to choices children make about what and how they learn. Senior leaders and staff should develop a consistent, coherent approach to planning learning to ensure that children receive their full entitlement to learning across the curriculum.
- The DHT meets with teachers each month to check children's progress in learning and discuss their wellbeing. Teachers use their detailed knowledge of individual children well to identify any difficulties they have with their learning. The DHT consults teachers and puts appropriate measures in place to provide support for children. They check regularly that planned support for children with barriers to learning, is making a difference.
- Senior leaders should extend the use of data to monitor children's progress as they move through the school. They should support teachers to develop skills in using data effectively to support and challenge decisions about next steps in learning. They should develop further, approaches to evidence children's progress. They should do this in a way that reflects children's progress overtime more clearly and suits the school context.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- Teachers make effective use of planning pathways for literacy and English and Numeracy and Mathematics. This ensures that children experience breadth and depth in literacy and numeracy. These pathways take appropriate account of prior learning and support children to make progress. Senior leaders identify the need to develop a progressive learning pathway for health and wellbeing, as a priority. All children influence contexts for learning which use links across different subjects. They enjoy making these choices and are more motivated to learn as a result.
- Teachers rely on their in-depth knowledge of children's prior learning to ensure appropriate coverage of experiences and outcomes. Senior leaders and teachers should put in place progressive learning pathways to ensure all children experience breadth and depth across all areas for the curriculum. This is to ensure that all children receive their full entitlement to a broad, coherent curriculum. There needs to be a clear framework to support any teacher deliver a full curriculum and ensure that children have no gaps in learning.
- Children across the school experience rich learning in a range of contexts including outdoors and in relation to the world of work. They also have opportunities for personal achievement. For example, their leadership roles as pupil council representatives, members of the eco committee and digital leaders. Teachers should make connections across the curriculum to further enhance this work. Teachers should plan these learning activities as part of a progressive skills programme.
- Senior leaders should continue as planned, to redesign clear principles for the curriculum at Tongue Primary. It is important to work with the whole school community including parents, partners, children and staff. This will ensure they reflect on and make the most of the unique location and context of the school.
- Children speak about enjoying learning Gaelic. Changes in staffing have had a detrimental impact on the capacity to teach Gaelic currently. Senior leaders should consider alternative approaches, such as providing children with access to online lessons. Children are keen for learning in Gaelic to continue.
- All children receive their full entitlement to two hours of high-quality physical education (PE) each week. Class teachers and specialist PE teachers provide a range of opportunities for children to learn and develop their skills.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- Senior leaders are working hard to re-introduce activities within the school that parents enjoy, post-pandemic. Parents enjoyed supporting social events and the children's show at Christmas. They welcome the return of being able to engage more in person, with the life of the school, as COVID-19 restrictions have eased. They realise the constraints of the pandemic, combined with staffing issues have impacted on school leaders' ability to re-introduce activities earlier. Most parents are keen to have more opportunities to re-engage with the life of the school. They would like to be involved in activities where they can learn together with their child.
- Almost all parents say that their child enjoys being at Tongue Primary and is making good progress. Most acknowledge that staff treat their children fairly and with respect and know them as individuals. Members of the Parent Council appreciate being consulted about the school's improvement priorities.

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.

3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

good

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

- All children at Tongue Primary learn in a caring, inclusive environment where they experience very positive relationships with staff and their peers. The positive climate is underpinned by mutual trust and respect. As a result, almost all children believe the school helps them to understand and respect other people.
- Children recognise their school, as one where everyone is included. Children highlight how welcoming they are to new pupils. This is echoed in the views of new families. Almost all children feel safe in school and when learning outdoors. Most children 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.
- Children talk confidently about how adults in school encourage them to take part in physical activities. These activities include cross-country, orienteering and learning outdoors. Children discuss knowledgeably how taking part helps them to be active and healthy. They value learning as an important part of keeping their minds active. They also share their awareness of the need to give their minds a rest. Their understanding of the importance of strong mental and physical health is growing. As a result of staffs' work on developing positive mindsets, children are becoming resilient learners. They share that they do not worry about making mistakes as this is a sign they are learning. They are becoming successful learners and confident individuals, as a result.
- Staff have prioritised children's emotional health within the curriculum following the pandemic. All children are learning how to manage their emotions better. Most children have a good understanding of all aspects of their wellbeing. They can identify how to improve their wellbeing and understand that as healthy individuals, they learn better. Senior leaders and teachers should now develop a coherent, progressive health and wellbeing pathway. This should provide a clear framework to support teachers' planning of health and wellbeing across all organisers.
- Staff support children to celebrate and value diversity with the help of the wider school community. For example, families of different nationalities and cultures share how and if, they celebrate Christmas. Children appreciate the traditions of different cultures. Children enjoy visiting the local care home and spending time with elderly residents. They visited to sing Christmas carols and shared their school show with them virtually. Children value time with older members of the community. They recognise that this helps to develop their communication skills and that they have a greater appreciation of an older generation. They are learning to value differences and similarities. Children are developing a sense of what discrimination is and how to challenge it. Staff should continue to plan opportunities to help children deepen their understating of diversity and challenge discrimination across a range of protected characteristics.

- Staff use outdoor spaces well to promote positive relationships and wellbeing. Children's regular involvement in outdoor learning and the natural environment is a key factor in developing their sense of wellbeing. They are proud of the valuable contributions they make to the wider community to help improve the village environment. For example, their litter picks, providing dog waste bag dispensers and planting trees to support biodiversity. They are becoming responsible citizens as a result.
- Children's learning experiences about food and where it comes from are meaningful and relevant. Children enjoy planting and harvesting the crops they grow in the school grounds. The cook uses the produce in the school kitchen and children are able to take some produce home. They recognise that being outdoors and learning about and growing fresh food is helping them to be healthier. Their planting focus currently is to provide food for the Planet Picnic later this year.
- All children are included in decision making in school. They describe how they are involved and take responsibility for aspects of school life, for example as digital leaders. All children are active members of the eco committee. All staff listen to and value children's views and ideas. As a result, children are developing as effective contributors. They are gaining leadership and organisational skills, as well as growing in confidence.
- Senior leaders are fully aware of their roles in relation to statutory duties which they fulfil effectively. Children who require additional support have effective wellbeing plans in place. These plans involve children, parents and staff effectively in their development, implementation and review. The DHT meets regularly with staff to identify any barriers to learning which individual children may face. Staff raise concerns at an early stage and take steps to ensure concerns are addressed quickly. All children who receive additional support for their learning have their support planned and reviewed regularly. This helps staff identify the impact of support and interventions effectively, make necessary adjustments and plan next steps. All staff have good awareness of individual children and their families. Their knowledge of children's needs is having a positive impact on children's wellbeing and inclusion.

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

- The number of children at each stage is relatively small and varies each session. This session there are no children in P1. A number of new children has joined the school since August 2022. Overall statements about attainment and progress rather than for specific year groups or levels are made to ensure that no child is identified.
- School achievement of a level data for session 2021/22 shows that most children achieved appropriate Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels in listening and taking and reading. A majority of children achieved appropriate CfE levels in writing and numeracy and mathematics. Overall, most children are making good progress in literacy and numeracy. Overall, children with barriers to learning are making good progress against their individual targets. Most children across the school are on track to achieve expected levels by the end of this session. A few children are capable of working beyond expected levels.
- Overall attainment data does not accurately reflect the negative impact of periods of remote learning on children's attainment. This is because of the small, varying numbers of children each year at P1, P4 and P7. The negative impact can be seen in school data. Children have been supported successfully by the steps taken to address weaknesses and gaps in learning.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, attainment in literacy and English is good.

Listening and talking

- Overall, most children are making good progress in listening and talking. Almost all children listen well and articulate their thoughts and opinions confidently, appropriate to their age and stage. They interact positively with staff, their peers and visitors. Most children contribute to discussions and are learning to take turns. As they progress through the school, children listen and talk effectively in pairs and small groups. A few older children build successfully on one another's answers and ask relevant questions to clarify their understanding.

Reading

- Overall, most children are making good progress in reading. Most children read well with fluency and expression, as appropriate to their age and stage. They show understanding of what they have read. As they progress through the school, children are developing their ability to respond to inferential and evaluative questions. Across the school, children talk enthusiastically about their favourite books and preferred authors. They use the school library to access a range of fiction and non-fiction books. A few children are capable of attaining more.

Writing

- Overall, most children are making good progress in writing. Children with barriers to learning are making good progress against their individual targets. Younger children punctuate most sentences accurately using a capital letter and full stop. Teachers should continue to encourage them to record independently their experiences and ideas. Children's ideas for writing are stimulated by the local environment and real-life events. Older children have written letters recently to the local council, the community council and local press to draw attention to light pollution locally. They express their views clearly and persuasively, offering solutions to reducing energy consumption.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, attainment in numeracy and mathematics is good.

Number, money and measure

- Younger children add and subtract successfully multiples of ten and 100 to or from whole numbers. A few children are beginning to solve addition and subtraction problems with three-digit whole numbers. A majority of children identify simple fractions, decimals and percentages appropriate to their age and stage of development. Younger children estimate realistically the lengths of objects in the outdoor environment. Older children need more practice working with different units of measurement. They lack confidence identifying the appropriate unit of measurement for length, weight and capacity.

Shape, position and movement

- Almost all children name and identify confidently simple two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects. Most children describe simple properties of common shapes. They show a developing understanding and interest in symmetry as they progress through the school. Older children accurately identify and illustrate lines of symmetry. They successfully apply their understanding to complete a range of symmetrical patterns. A few children recognise right, acute and obtuse angles.

Information handling

- Most children understand and use tally marks. They recognise and interpret simple bar graphs. Younger children gathered data about the types of birds they spotted as part of the Schools' Big Birdwatch. They displayed this data successfully on a graph showing clearly a title and labelling both axis accurately. Older children shared their understanding of creating surveys displaying data in bar graphs. All children would benefit from learning to use digital technologies to create graphs of different kinds to display data appropriately.

Attainment over time

- Overall, children are making good progress in literacy and numeracy from their prior levels of attainment. The small roll and the numbers of children at each stage mean that any trends in attainment data overtime, are unreliable. Senior leaders and teachers use the local authority tracking system to record children's progress in literacy and numeracy. Year on year, attainment data fluctuates due to ongoing changes in the school roll. Senior leaders are aware that they should develop further, approaches to evidence children's progress overtime more effectively. Teachers' professional judgements are becoming more reliable as they become more confident using a range of assessment. Staff monitor the progress individual children make towards meeting their individual targets in literacy and numeracy. They provide helpful, targeted support for children who need support to overcome barriers to learning. This is supporting children to make appropriate progress.

Overall quality of learner's achievements

- All children are supportive of one another and are proud of their achievements. Staff celebrate children's wider achievements through assemblies, newsletters and attractive wall displays. This session children are beginning to use an online platform to share their successes with their parents. Children are successful in a range of opportunities available to them in school. They relish the responsibilities they take on across the school and the local area. They recognise the effective contribution they make to the school community as digital leaders, members of the eco group, pupil council representatives. All children are members of the eco group and have recently secured the school's fourth eco flag. This is in recognition of children's understanding of environmental issues and how they look after their local area. They have been presented with the Young Highlander Award for their work in the local community. Their citizenship skills are well developed. All children know their contributions make a positive difference to their own lives and the lives of others.
- The school has made a positive start to tracking children's involvement in wider achievement activities. Children need to continue to be aware of and identify the skills they are developing through their participation. Staff need to ensure opportunities for achievement progress children's skills. They should support children more to make links between their achievements, learning and progress.

Equity for all learners

- All staff have a clear understanding of the socio-economic and cultural context of the rural community. They are aware of a growing need within their rural community for support to cope with significant rises in the cost of living. Their awareness of the challenges facing families was heightened during the pandemic. Senior leaders seek and secure support successfully from a range of sources, including local charities and the community council. Working together effectively with partners, staff play a key role in providing practical assistance to families and contribute to a strong sense of community. They are sensitive and discrete in their approach to support vulnerable children.
- Senior leaders use Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) well to provide a range of targeted and universal interventions in literacy and numeracy. These interventions are having a positive impact on children's attainment and addressing successfully gaps in their learning. Senior leaders keep an accurate overview of support for children funded by PEF. They review regularly the progress children are making towards their individual targets. They should continue to develop approaches to tracking the attainment of specific groups of children and compare their progress with national standards. In doing this, they should ensure that children are not adversely affected by their socio-economic context.

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.