

# Summarised inspection findings

**Achiltibuie Primary School and Nursery Class**

The Highland Council

27 August 2019

## Key contextual information

Achiltibuie Primary School is situated in the North West Ross-shire country area of Coigach and South West of Sutherland within Assynt and is associated with Ullapool High School. The headteacher who has been in post for seven years also has responsibility for Lochinver Primary School as part of a two school cluster. The roll in the school is 16 and a small number of part time children in the nursery class. The FME entitlement is 20% and there are around a third of the roll identified as having additional support needs.

### 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

### Learning and engagement

- Children across the school are friendly, happy and behave very well. They support each other in a variety of ways during lessons and while taking part in physical education lessons on the playing field. They show kindness and respect and take care to include everyone in activities at break times. Children say they feel safe in school and that they are helped by their teachers to become confident learners. During our visit they demonstrated their confidence in using tablet computers to write a newspaper article about a trip to Dunrobin Castle.
- The ethos within each of the two primary stages classes is friendly and the relationships between the children and their teachers are built on mutual respect and trust. Children enjoy their role as buddies to younger children about to start school. Most children are capable of taking on many more opportunities to lead and be responsible for improving aspects of school life and their learning. Children's ideas are sought on how to improve the environment for learning but their suggestions are not consistently acted upon. This was mentioned by children when we talked to them. They were disappointed that the improvements to the outdoor play areas which they had helped to plan had yet to be realised.
- We found most children to be motivated and excited about learning in class and out and about in their community. Children enjoyed being detectives finding clues using magnifying glasses during a science lesson on forces.
- We have asked the school to ensure that all of the outside areas that children have access to during the school day for learning are assessed for risk. This is an activity which children themselves could be involved in to promote their skills for learning life and work.
- The activities which teachers plan for children provide a satisfactory level of challenge. Overall, the pace of learning could have been brisker. Children lose valuable time for learning because the structure of the school day is not rigorously adhered to. The headteacher needs to ensure that children receive their full entitlement to teaching time and not allow morning and lunch breaks to extend beyond the allotted time. An easy solution to this would be to fix the bell system which according to the school has been broken for some time.

## Quality of teaching

- The quality of teaching is varied. In the best lessons, teachers' explanations and instructions and expectations are clear. Almost all children respond enthusiastically to the tasks teachers set for them. Teachers make good use of interactive whiteboards to set out what children are going to learn. Teachers' use of open and closed questions to gauge children's level of understanding is mostly well-judged. However, in a few lessons, teachers missed some opportunities to probe children's thinking more deeply. Teachers could extend children's opportunities to lead their learning and give them time to think about how they might tackle an activity. Children need to set individual learning targets in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing.

## Effective use of assessment

- Teachers assess children's progress using their professional judgement and through the use of commercially produced standardised assessments. They also gather qualitative data from formative and summative assessments. Teachers in the two primary classes work well together to plan future learning based on their analysis of the range of assessment information they gather. They also work regularly with the staff in the nursery to plan opportunities for the youngest children to come together to learn. They use their knowledge of children's individual needs to plan transition activities in the primary classroom and outdoor areas. An important next step would be to plan for play based learning for both P1 and nursery children in the playroom where they could engage in jointly planned early level activities.
- Teachers have limited experience of using the national benchmarks. The headteacher needs to ensure that teachers are empowered to have a full understanding of how to use national guidance. This would include being part of the wider associated school's group moderation activities.

## Planning tracking and monitoring

- The systems for planning children's activities are based on a range of systems, some of which have been developed by Highland Council. There is some evidence of collaborative work between the nursery staff and school staff when planning the early level. Opportunities for the very youngest children to learn together through play offer rich potential for teachers to plan, track and monitor children's progress in learning. Working in this way will ensure children gain important social skills and allow them to explore their interests in meaningful play contexts.
- Teachers recently explored different ways to profile children's progress. They are keen to take this initiative forward to ensure an accurate profile of children's progress over time is available as a record for both children and their parents. At the time of the inspection, no decision had been made as to which system best suited the needs of the school.
- Parents who met with the inspection team wanted to have more regular communication and sharing of information that provides them with a clearer picture of how well their children are progressing in their learning. They felt frustrated that their efforts to be involved in their child's learning were not acted upon by the headteacher.
- An electronic tracking system is in existence. The number of children on the school roll means that any interpretation of the data needs to be set in the context of a small school. The headteacher keeps records of children's progress in literacy and numeracy. There were no data available that tracked children's progress in health and wellbeing.

## 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 that need to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

## 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

- Overall, attainment in literacy and attainment in numeracy is satisfactory. The school's most recent data suggests that the majority of children achieve the appropriate national levels of literacy and numeracy. A few children are exceeding these levels. The assessment information gathered from children's participation in the Scottish National Assessment does not align with teachers' professional judgement of children's achievement of Curriculum for Excellence levels. The headteacher now needs to work with teachers to generate more reliable data. As teachers gain confidence in making professional judgements then a more robust picture of how well children are achieving will emerge.

### Literacy

#### Listening and talking

- Overall, children are making satisfactory progress in listening and talking. Across the school, the majority of children listen closely to each other and staff. Most make relevant contributions to paired and small group discussions. A few children working in early and in first level are still learning to listen attentively and remain on task for longer periods of time. During a literacy lesson, a few children were able to explain very well the meaning of complex vocabulary within a story. Children working towards second level in discussion with peers can create their own success criteria for tasks teachers set for them.

### Reading

- Overall, children are making satisfactory progress in reading. Children access a range of fiction and non-fiction texts and online materials linked to their topics. The whole school visits the village hall library each week to chose books to read at home. Children enjoy these visits which are successfully promoting most children's interest in books. Children working at the early level can follow a story line, predict what comes next and identify the main characters. Children working at first and towards second level have clear preferences about the type of books they enjoy reading. They can name and justify their favourite authors. Children find some of the reading books provided by the school uninteresting. The school needs to engage with children to source a wider range of motivating texts.

### Writing

- The majority of children working at the early level form sentences correctly using capital letters and full stops. Children working at first level are able to use a range of appropriate punctuation such as question marks, commas and exclamation marks. Across the school, the quality of handwriting and presentation of written work in jotters and workbooks is poor. Closer attention to detail is needed. Children working at first and towards second level, can explain and give examples of similies, metaphors, alliteration and onomatopoeia. They can plan their writing using an agreed structure and provide a summary of the main body of text, using who, where, why and when. They need to regularly write at length and use different genres as the focus for

their writing. Teachers should agree on a common and consistently used format for providing feedback to children on the quality of their writing. Children do not routinely engage in self or peer reflection on how well they are achieving Curriculum for Excellence outcomes. Children are not familiar with setting targets or what they need to do to improve the quality of their written work.

### **Numeracy and mathematics**

- Overall, attainment in numeracy is satisfactory. The majority of children are making appropriate progress in numeracy and mathematics. Children did not know which level of Curriculum for Excellence they are working on. They now need to set appropriate targets in numeracy. The recent focus on improving children's mental agility is beginning to impact positively on their acquisition of basic number facts.

### **Number money and measure**

- Most children working at the early level can count orally with confidence up to and beyond 100. They count to ten in Gaelic when taking part in other activities across the curriculum. Children working at first level and towards second level can read both analogue and 24 hour digital displays. They can correctly identify the place value of numbers up to one million. They are mostly accurate in mental computation and in written computation involving addition and subtraction of numbers up to 999. The majority can accurately convert percentages into simple fractions.

### **Shape position and movement**

- Children working at the early level can identify the properties of two-dimensional shapes. They are less confident at naming and three-dimensional objects and their properties. At first level, the majority of children can correctly name and draw right, obtuse and acute angles.

### **Information handling**

- Children across early and first level have insufficient opportunities to gain skills in handling and displaying information. We could find little evidence of children collecting data and analysing it to create graphs and charts.

### **Attainment over time**

- Over the past three years, the school's pattern of attainment has fluctuated. The data provided by the school needs to be used with caution as the small numbers involved are better viewed in the round alongside other qualitative data. There is a good awareness of the socio-economic background and of the specific health or social and emotional needs of children and families.

### **Overall quality of learners' achievements**

- Children contribute to the life of the school in a number of ways. Through their work as buddies to younger children they are becoming more confident and responsible for the care and wellbeing of their friends and younger children. Children take responsibility for caring for the school grounds. They frequently tend the vegetables and plants in the school garden. Through the learning council and at whole school gatherings they discuss what they would like to change. The children we met with wanted to have free access to the playing field and to have a gate from the playground to the field.
- Throughout the school day, and because of the small number of children in the school, they often support each other during lessons. As a result, the majority of children show good team working and citizenship skills. Their achievements are recognised through teachers' effective and appropriate use of praise, through rewards and at occasional whole school gatherings.

- There are currently no after school opportunities for children. The school does not track children's wider achievements in or out of school.
- Children are not familiar with the wellbeing indicators and they are not encouraged to use the language of inclusion though they are naturally nurturing and caring.

### **Equity for all learners**

- Teachers are highly supportive of all children. They promote an inclusive environment through their positive and equitable teaching approaches.
- The Pupil Equity Fund had been used to create an additional post to help improve children's attainment in literacy. The aim was to share practice and work alongside teachers to implement new strategies for improving children's attainment and achievement in both literacy and numeracy. Another focus of the project was to work with parents to equip them with skills to support their child's learning. The post was to be shared across the associated schools group however, the post holder left and other arrangements are now being considered.
- Using their daily 'check ins' with their teacher, children can highlight how they are feeling. Children's attendance is monitored monthly by the headteacher. Children and families are notified if absences or late coming is considered an issue. The importance of good attendance and time-keeping is highlighted to parents.

## 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.