

Summarised inspection findings

Whalsay School

Shetland Islands Council

30 June 2020

School name Whalsay School
Council: Shetland Island Council
SEED number: 6104134
Roll (Sep 2018): Primary department 98, Secondary department 45.

Attendance is generally above the national average.

In February 2019 fewer than 5% of pupils were registered for free school meals. In September 2018 no pupils live in 20% most deprived datazones in Scotland. In September 2018 the school reported that 19% of pupils in the primary department and 27% of pupils in the secondary department had additional support needs.

Key contextual information

Whalsay School is an all-through school providing education for children and young people up to S4, with a nursery class, primary stages and secondary departments. It serves the island of Whalsay, to the east of the Shetland mainland. The nursery and primary education accommodation is purpose-built. They are situated a short distance from the secondary education accommodation. The island's leisure centre shares the same campus area as the nursery and primary departments.

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

- Staff have worked well with the community to begin to clarify the school's purpose and sense of direction. The recent work has provided a foundation from which the school is developing a rationale for its curriculum for the primary and secondary stages. The rationale needs further development to fulfil its purpose as a clear basis for the curriculum, reflecting the needs of children and young people and their island community.
- The school identifies 'Achieving Together' as a summary of its overall purpose and mission. The values of belonging, enjoyment, creativity, health and responsibility have been confirmed through consultation, and are now the focus for priorities in the school improvement plan. The values are the school's reference points, guiding its work to design and deliver learning experiences to promote children's and young people's attainment and achievement. Work continues to ensure that all children and young people see the values as relevant in their learning at all stages in school.
- The school should develop a more precise and valid definition of its vision. This would provide a concise, accessible and memorable key to sharing its overall purpose with the community. Continuing effective collaboration with stakeholders, staff should also revisit school aims. These aims could form a foundation on which to begin defining high-quality learning and teaching and the characteristics of an excellent lesson in Whalsay School.
- Staff's approaches to strategic planning are based on some appropriate use of self-evaluation to identify strengths and areas for development. They are not yet sufficiently skilled in using the national self-evaluation resource, *How good is our school?* (fourth edition). Currently, improvement planning focuses on a single year of development. This approach is helpful in setting out realistic targets and an appropriately small number of priorities. However, it does not provide the framework for longer-term development objectives, which would enable staff to take a more strategic view of pacing improvements.
- Although improvement planning of the nursery, primary and secondary departments is completed together, senior leaders should take greater account of the school's all-through status. Senior leaders and staff should build their skills and confidence in working with those sectors with which they are less familiar, including in respect of quality assurance. With the local authority's guidance and support, the headteacher has worked to ensure that teachers have the right capacities to meet the needs of the children and young people. The school's adoption of more recent local authority guidance on improvement planning has been helpful. That advice has enabled a clearer focus on the school's unique circumstances and needs.
- Staff have undertaken a wide range of professional learning in recent years, demonstrating commitment to improving their practice. As a next step, senior leaders should ensure a closer focus of professional learning on school priorities. They should also seek ways of providing

opportunities for staff to share their professional learning to the benefit of the whole school community.

- The school continues to implement improvements, spanning a range of children's and young people's experiences and outcomes. For example, enhancements of the curriculum have included improved provision for numeracy and mathematics across the primary and secondary stages. These improvements have included stronger involvement of parents, and useful resources to highlight numeracy in all areas of the curriculum. The school's plans for further improvements for numeracy include a greater emphasis on mental mathematical skills.
- The headteacher has made significant progress in establishing a staff team capable, in time, of delivering a curriculum to meet the school's ambitions. He has shown sound judgement, creativity and resilience in dealing with challenging staffing issues. That significant investment of his time has been important in ensuring positive relationships and teamwork. His efforts have won him the support and respect of parents and the wider community. These achievements now position him and the school well, to take further steps to improve the school's performance, and to increase the pace of change.
- Following on from the school's work on values, two working groups of staff have developed a better understanding of factors affecting the learning of children and young people. These groups have explored the importance of behaviours and creativity, respectively, as potentially strong influences on learning experiences and attainment. The work of the creativity group takes an appropriately broad and inclusive definition of the concept, which should support staff well in driving improvements in learning and teaching, and in the curriculum. It will be important that the relationships and behaviour working group seeks an equally forward-looking purpose and outcome. Participation in these groups is enhancing staff's professional skills and has the potential to impact positively on children's and young people's attainment and achievement.
- The headteacher has provided a positive role model for staff by designing and introducing learning experiences in the school's programme of wider achievement. These initiatives have included 'Fishing by Numbers', recognising the local importance of the fishing industry economically and culturally. The programme has capitalised on the high status of fishing in the school community, and used young people's motivation as a vehicle for promoting the development of skills in numeracy.
- The two job-share depute headteachers in the primary department are respected by staff, parents and children for being strong role models, the teamwork they have promoted, and the improvements they support. The skills which they and the headteacher demonstrate have the clear potential to drive improvements across the nursery, primary and secondary stages, including in those sectors with which they are presently less familiar.
- School leaders are making good progress in implementing national priorities in Developing the Young Workforce (DYW), particularly around promoting vocational pathways. However, they recognise the need to improve consistency of implementation around the Career Education Standard (CES) across all curriculum areas.
- Children and young people demonstrate significant capacity to take leading roles in the school. At the primary stages, children take on duties to support work in class and across the school, for example as members of the pupil council. Others act as Junior Road Safety Officers, or as leaders of sporting activities. Children at P6 demonstrated enterprising teamwork and leadership by successfully planning and delivering a school music concert, which was well supported by the local community. At the secondary stages, young people have opportunities to act as World of Work Ambassadors or Young Sports Ambassadors, or take on roles in the

pupil council. By the end of S3, all young people can achieve a qualification in leadership, supported by the school's Active Sports Coordinator. Participation in the Youth Philanthropy Initiative provides young people with valuable experience in negotiating and presenting ideas and proposals, contributing to their development as leaders. These leadership opportunities demonstrate, convincingly, children's ability to take on responsibilities.

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

- The school has a welcoming, positive ethos. This is enhanced by the rich historical heritage celebrated by all staff and learners across the school. Almost all children and young people are motivated and keen to learn. There are strong, trusting relationships between teachers and children and young people, and amongst children and young people. There is a supportive atmosphere where all are treated with respect. As a result, children are confident to ask questions and seek help during lessons.
- In the majority of lessons, children are engaged well in their learning. Almost all children and young people participate and interact well during activities within and out-with the classroom. They also support one another well during group work. Children and young people have opportunities to work individually, in pairs and in small groups. In almost all lessons in the primary stages, the purposes and outcomes of learning are made clear. Children understand what they need to do to be successful. However, this is less consistent in the secondary department.
- Overall, in most lessons, tasks, activities and resources are matched well to meet the needs of almost all children and young people. In the primary department, teachers provide well-differentiated learning activities that ensure children make effective progress. Across the school, there is scope to build on this existing good practice to allow all young people to make the best possible progress. For a few young people, the planned learning experiences are insufficiently challenging and the pace of learning is too slow. Teachers need to provide increased opportunities for children and young people to engage in active learning where they develop skills such as higher-order thinking and problem solving. In a few classes, children take responsibility for leading learning. Children and young people would benefit from experiencing increased independence in their learning where they take decisions, initiate and organise tasks and demonstrate self-reliance.
- In the majority of lessons, digital technology is used effectively to support learning. Children and young people apply their research and presentation skills and share their thoughts and ideas confidently using digital technology. Primary staff are starting to make use of a progressive digital skills framework. In moving forward, the school should consider ways in which learners can independently access digital technology to support and challenge them in all areas of learning. Children in the primary department and young people from S1-S3 share reflections on their learning with their parents through blogs and e-portfolios.
- In most lessons, teachers provide clear explanations and instructions. Across the school, children and young people receive feedback, which helps them to understand themselves as learners. In a few examples, high-quality feedback is linked well to the progression of skills and knowledge, leading to learners building on prior learning. Written feedback is most effective when teachers identify next steps in children's writing at the primary stages. The school should

develop a shared understanding of pedagogy and define what effective learning and teaching should look like. The staff teams across all stages should ensure they develop consistently high-quality learning and teaching through an agreed learning and teaching framework. This will inform reflective, professional dialogue, empower staff and help share effective practice.

- The school uses a varied range of assessment evidence, including Scottish National Standardised Assessments, to help determine how well children and young people are progressing. In most lessons, children and young people have opportunities to self and peer-assess. Teachers should continue to develop their understanding of the range of assessment data available to inform them when planning next steps in children's and young people's learning.
- Teachers of young people in S4 have a clear understanding of standards in National Qualifications and plan a range of appropriate assessment activities. Young people receive effective feedback on progress and next steps through learning conversations with their subject teacher and through written comments and reports.
- Teachers are at an early stage in developing confidence in how they assess when children and young people have achieved a Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) level. Staff should continue to work with each other, to build greater confidence and capacity to make informed judgements about progress in learning. In the current year, all staff have engaged in moderation activity with a focus on literacy. The school should continue to develop further strategies to ensure the reliability and validity of teacher judgements. In the secondary stages, there is scope for gathering evidence about how curricular areas are contributing to young people's progress in levels of literacy and numeracy.
- The school has started to develop approaches to tracking and monitoring. This includes information about children and young people's progress in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. This provides valuable information about those who face potential barriers and those with protected characteristics. Senior leaders should continue to evaluate the impact of the tracking system and engage all staff in discussions about the progress of all children and young people. There is a need to develop an overview to monitor young people's progress across all curricular areas in the secondary stages.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- The school community has identified building resilience and developing transferrable skills for the future as among key skills they wish their children and young people to develop through the curriculum. It has also identified certain unique features such as community, location, vocational education and employment, which should underpin the curriculum. These provide a promising point from which to develop a curriculum rationale that is tailored to the unique island context and culture of Whalsay. A few curriculum areas' approaches to interdisciplinary learning and courses, such as rural skills in the secondary, are already taking account of a wide range of aspects of the school's context.
- Staff across the school are making use of a numeracy framework and engaging with the National Benchmarks to support assessment of children and young people's progress. There are plans to extend engagement with a literacy progression framework from next session. Primary staff involve children in planning through the use of their floorbooks. Staff in the secondary department are engaging with experiences and outcomes to inform course planning within curriculum areas.
- The school makes good use of learning pathways to support teachers in planning of experiences and outcomes in literacy and numeracy in the primary department. This use is at early stages, but is already showing benefits in staff's understanding of where children are in their learning and planning their next steps. The school has introduced pathways in curriculum areas such as '1+2' languages, and digital technology. Their use is at very early stages and they are currently being used to ensure fuller coverage of experiences and outcomes in the curricular areas. There are plans to introduce local authority learning pathways across all curriculum areas in the primary department.
- Senior leaders are aware that there needs to be better continuity and progression in children and young people's learning across the broad general education (BGE). This is particularly relevant to the school's all-through context. There needs to be much greater sharing of information between the nursery and the primary, as well as between the primary and secondary departments. This should avoid repetition of topics and placing an unnecessary ceiling on children and young people's progress. This should also support increased momentum in the pace of learning. Building more effectively on what young people have learned and achieved at the primary stages could be achieved by sharing tracking and planning throughout the BGE.
- Despite the significant challenges presented by difficulties in staffing and the rurality of the school, the school provides access to all curricular areas for all children and young people. Digital solutions, such as distance learning in Spanish and accordion are helping to overcome barriers. However, digital connectivity can be a barrier to successful delivery. In the senior phase, staff provide a range of opportunities to specialise across the curriculum. Young people have good access to personalisation and choice. At the end of S3, young people choose courses in seven National Qualifications. There is an eighth column, which provides flexibility in areas such as in personal and social education, religious and moral education, as well as more individualised pathways for young people.
- Almost all young people in S3 and S4 take part in Skills for Work and vocational pathways programmes at local colleges. These programmes are organised as part of the vocational pathways initiative managed in partnership by Shetland Island Council's (SIC) Schools Service, Shetland College and NAFC Marine Centre. Young people take advantage of vocational programmes, not on offer in the school, such as aquaculture, construction crafts, hairdressing,

maritime skills, sound engineering and video production. These allow young people to become familiar with the world of work and employment-related practical experience.

- Partners contribute to both the school curriculum and to bespoke support arrangements the school puts in place for individual young people. This increases the skills and self-esteem children and young people have. For example, Active Schools run a Leadership Academy programme, which engages young people from S1-S3 well and increases their creativity skills such as problem solving. Shetland College run digital literacy courses for local adults in the school library, on occasion the school has supported individual young people to participate where this best meets their learning needs.
- The school is supported well by their Skills Development Scotland (SDS) careers adviser who plans activities in line the School Partnership Agreement (SPA). This is reviewed regularly to ensure it meets the needs of the young people. Careers staff provide helpful career advice to young people, which includes group-work and individual consultations with all pupils. Visits are scheduled to coincide with times when year groups are making course choices and associated parents' events.
- The development of the CES and Career Management Skills (CMS) is not yet incorporated fully within subject delivery. This is resulting in missed opportunities for reinforcing and consolidating CMS of young people. School leaders recognise there is scope to improve this through future joint working with SDS through a revised SPA.
- The school works well with SIC schools' work experience coordinator to identify suitable work experience opportunities for S3 pupils, in line with SIC's arrangements. All young people in S3 take part in work placements and this has helped them develop a range of useful employability skills.
- Senior staff make good use of local labour market intelligence to inform aspects of curriculum planning and young people's future aspirations for employment. Staff use their local knowledge and contacts to engage effectively with employers in different industry sectors across the curriculum. There are examples of productive employer links which support well young people's learning and understanding of local industries.
- Young people who move to Anderson High School to complete their senior phase have the opportunity to take Foundation Apprenticeships at SCQF level 6. In the current S4 cohort who are moving in June 2020, the majority have chosen to include a Foundation Apprenticeship as part of their studies.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- Parents and families are very proud of the school and the key role it plays in their island community. Almost all parents say that their child likes being at Whalsay School, that they feel safe and that they are treated fairly and with respect. Almost all report that the school is well led, although a minority of parents feel their views are not taken into account when changes are made in the school. A few parents would like more information about how their child is assessed and how the school can support them to develop their child's learning at home.
- The school uses a range of ways to communicate with parents including letters, newsletters, text messages and social media. A closed social media page and the school website have improved communication between home and school. There are high levels of parent participation in parents' evenings. The school plans to build on curriculum events, for example, the numeracy open afternoon, to further engage parents in supporting learning.
- Parent and community partners are encouraged to be involved in the life of the school. Volunteers support the school, for example, in launching the School of Rock project and fundraising for play equipment in the school and installing it in the playground.
- The Parent Council meets termly and is very well organised. It has representation from the nursery class through to the secondary department. It undertakes fundraising to support the school in subsidising events and buying resources to enhance the learning environment.
- The Parent Council has been involved in developing the school values and rationale and agreeing the priorities in the school improvement plan. As planned, the school should continue to seek ways to further engage parents in supporting learning and evaluating the impact of the curriculum in raising attainment and achievement.
- The school has a productive partnership with SDS which results in useful support for pupils. The SPA is jointly negotiated, approved and monitored routinely to review progress towards delivery.

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. Areas for development have been agreed with the school and the local authority.

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

- Across the primary and secondary departments, the school has a positive ethos founded on strong values. It is inclusive in its support for children, young people and their families. The staff team demonstrates respect for children and young people and values them as individuals. The school places significant importance on positive relationships and responsibilities as key features of its success in promoting wellbeing. The school is valued by the community for its approaches to supporting wellbeing for children, young people and their families.
- The headteacher leads weekly support for learning meetings with key staff, to monitor children and young people's progress, and ensure initiatives and support strategies are effective. They address concerns raised by staff or parents and access appropriate supports as necessary. There is a professional working group tasked with developing a whole-school approach to restorative practices. Staff across the school, support positive behaviours consistently and this is reflected in almost all interactions throughout the school.
- Staff who have support for learning roles work effectively together to provide targeted support for individuals. Staff involve parents in planning meetings and include children's views when planning targets and next steps. Children and young people should be more aware of their targets to help them take more ownership of their learning. Interventions and individualised support for families are leading to improved attendance. Support for learning staff are valued for their contribution to helping children succeed in their learning and work well together in teams. Staff know children and their families very well. They model positive relationships founded on mutual respect and provide a caring environment for children and young people. Children and young people behave very well.
- Across the school children and young people support one another well and show empathy for others. Teachers and support staff work effectively together. The teamwork in the primary department is an important strength. Staff share their expertise and provide professional support to one another. The school should consider building further on its positive ethos through developing a whole-school approach to nurture. This should strengthen consistency throughout and take forward the promising work started on positive behaviours.
- Almost all children and young people feel safe in school and know how to get help when they need it. Most children and young people have a good awareness of the wellbeing indicators and their understanding of these is developing well. Staff now need to develop systematic and regular use of the wellbeing indicators to ensure all children and young people have an increased understanding of their own progress in wellbeing. Staff across the school should evaluate the recently implemented resources to ensure progression in learning. There is potential for the school to demonstrate improved outcomes for children through developing consistency in the assessment of health and wellbeing.

- The school works effectively with partners to provide support for children, young people and their families. Partners' input in the personal and social education programme helps young people to gain greater understanding of issues such as consent. Health professionals regularly engage with the school. They contribute to effective support for individuals, and commendably, children and young people's high standards in dental health.
- Key duties of the Health Promotion and Nutrition Act are being met and food and drinks provided at mealtimes meet the required standards.
- Children and young people are developing a good understanding of the importance of healthy lifestyles. Most children and young people participate in sporting activities offered at after school clubs. Primary children are developing leadership skills successfully through their play leader roles, encouraging others to participate in play activities. Sports Ambassadors in the secondary department use their skills in leadership and teamwork successfully to promote increasing numbers participating in sports. The Active Schools initiative encourages young people to be active and to try a variety of sporting activities. Young people benefit from access to extensive sports facilities including the full-sized all weather football pitch. They are successfully developing a competitive and community spirit through netball and football training and matches. There is a need to ensure all children and young people feel they have equal opportunities to participate in team sports. Children and young people are developing skills in swimming at the nearby leisure centre and the school ensures there are no barriers to participation.
- The school, in partnership with parents and partners, has identified the importance of ensuring children and young people understand the safe use of the internet. This is a successful whole-school focus and children can articulate how to keep themselves safe. At the secondary stages, young people understand gender stereotyping and age appropriateness of digital games. The Eco Group is actively pursuing sufficient success to gain the school's first green flag. It is successfully raising awareness of environmental issues and encouraging others to be responsible citizens by conducting litter surveys and a beach clean at North Voe. Young people in the secondary department participate in the Youth Philanthropy Initiative and lead support for local charities.
- The pupil councils are active in their role and take forward the views gathered from children and young people. The school should consider ways in which children's and young people's views can be heard through further use of national guidance self-evaluation tools, such as How good is OUR school? (HGIOURS). The school and young people would benefit from collaborating together and building on the positive relationships and responsible citizenship work, by developing further their understanding of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Senior leaders have a good understanding of statutory requirements in relation to wellbeing, equality and inclusion.
- The school's resources for health and wellbeing ensure children and young people learn about equality, diversity and discrimination. The ongoing development and evaluation of the health and wellbeing curriculum should provide teachers with the opportunity to ensure continuity and progression in the all-through school context. The school should now develop its equalities policy to more clearly define its work on inclusion and ensure a shared understanding of diversity and equality. This needs to reflect the context of the school and what it wants to achieve through its curriculum rationale. This will support the school's drive to build young people's resilience and develop transferrable skills for the future as outlined in the school improvement plan.

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

Broad General Education

Attainment in literacy and numeracy

- Overall, levels of attainment in literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics are good.
- Most children in the primary department are making good progress in literacy and numeracy.
- In 2019, by the end of S3, all young people in the secondary department achieved CfE third level in literacy and numeracy and most achieved literacy and numeracy at CfE fourth level.

Primary stages

Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, the standard of literacy and English attainment across the school is good. Most children are making expected progress. Children who require additional support are making appropriate progress.

Listening and talking

- Almost all children are making good progress in listening and talking. Across the primary department, children listen well to instructions from adults and speak with confidence to one another. Most share their ideas confidently when working in pairs. At the early level, children take turns when listening and talking to each other. They follow instructions carefully and are independent in their learning. They are confident in class routines and when making choices about activities. At first level, almost all children listen attentively. They share their thoughts and ideas appropriately and are confident in making contributions when discussing books they have enjoyed reading. They are developing social skills in co-operative groups and ensure everyone takes part equally. By second level, most children are articulate in sharing their opinions and build effectively on one another's ideas. They are confident in taking roles in mixed groups and responding to questions from teachers. They apply their presentation skills through leading assemblies. They are confident in promoting their dialect.

Reading

- Overall, most children are making good progress in reading. At the early level, almost all children recognise initial sounds and simple common words. They are confident in using their phonic skills to attempt new words when reading aloud. Children working at first level are enthusiastic about reading and use their skills well in a variety of learning contexts. They are becoming skilled in using expression when reading a play script and reading together in groups. They are enthusiastic readers and enjoy selecting books from the well-stocked school library. By second level, most children read for enjoyment and with good comprehension. They recognise the techniques of authors to influence readers and the use of emotive language.

They select fiction books from the school library and read regularly for pleasure. They apply their skills in reading to research topics using non-fiction texts and the internet.

Writing

- Overall, most children are making good progress in writing. At the early level, most children are developing the confidence to write independently. A few form words legibly to form sentences and simple stories. At first level, most children organise their writing appropriate to the tasks they are given. They apply writing skills across the curriculum and write for a variety of purposes. At second level, most children are making good progress. They write well-crafted factual reports and imaginative stories. Writing is contextualised well and children apply their skills in a variety of genre. Teachers across the school should continue to share samples of moderated writing to support consistency in expectations.

Attainment in numeracy

- Most children attain well in numeracy at the primary stages, and almost all enjoy their mathematical learning experiences. By the end of P1, most children achieve CfE early level. The majority achieve CfE first level by the end of P4, and the school has taken steps to begin to increase the proportion achieving this level. By the end of P7, almost all children achieve CfE second level. A few progress further with specific aspects of CfE third level.
- Most children demonstrate effective skills in mental calculations and problem solving, supported by the appropriate focus which staff place on these skills. However, staff place too much emphasis on text book resources, associated too closely with each stage, as a means of ensuring structure to learning. That approach places unhelpful limits on children's attainment as it fails to recognise, sufficiently, individuals' different rates of progress. This over-reliance on texts also results too often in abstract tasks. Staff should revise programmes in mathematics. They should provide challenge more appropriate to the needs of individual children, and focus more on real-life contexts in which children can apply their numeracy skills. Staff should also keep the use of its core mathematics digital resource under review, to ensure the best overall balance to the mathematics programme and to approaches to learning and teaching.

Number, money and measurement

- Most children make good progress in number, money and measurement. Children working at CfE early level develop their number skills through practical tasks such as gathering samples of natural materials for an information handling task. Working at CfE first level, children can apply the idea of fractions to sharing a pizza with friends. They enjoy using an interactive digital resource, working at speed to calculate a quarter, a third and a half. A few children found these tasks too easy. By P4, working at CfE first level, children can identify all the coins and notes in everyday use, and can work out different combinations of coins to achieve a specific sum of money. Children working at CfE second level use analogue and digital clocks well, converting between the two and using 12- and 24-hour examples confidently. Most can estimate distances and times with accuracy and appropriate units. For example, they suggested using centimetres to measure a pencil, and metres to estimate the length of the Zephyr fishing boat. By the end of P7, most children use the four number functions with confidence, and demonstrate effective mental skills.

Shape, position and movement

- Most children make good progress in their knowledge and understanding of shape, position and movement. Children working at CfE early level can identify some two-dimensional shapes, for example relating to their task on data handling. Working at CfE first level, children enjoy exploring the concept of symmetry, using mirrors to reflect shapes in grids. Children working at CfE second level make confident use of expressions relating to position and movement. By P7,

working at CfE second level, children can describe different angles and a good range of two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects.

Information handling

- Working at CfE early level, children can sort natural materials into similar sets. They can apply criteria such as colour or texture, and use Venn diagrams to identify where two criteria are met. Progressing through CfE first level, children show good understanding of how to gather, organise and present data from a range of surveys, with their work displayed around the school. Children make appropriate use of techniques such as tally marks when, for example, they carry out a survey of favourite brands of sport shoe. Children working at CfE second level demonstrate effective progression of information handling skills. They are knowledgeable about different forms of graphical presentation, such as line graphs and histograms, explaining when each is more appropriately used. Children working at CfE second level also demonstrate important knowledge of how to use digital resources to process and present data. P7 children working in a focus group were very capable numeracy problem solvers, and applied their skills well to new mathematical challenges.

Attainment over time

Broad general education

- The school has identified declines in attainment data in writing and reading at CfE first level. Staff have developed strategies to address these as a matter of priority. They have used Scottish National Standardised Assessment data in numeracy to identify any gaps children or young people have in knowledge or skills in numeracy and are addressing these.
- There is moderation activity at second level in literacy and numeracy across the primary and secondary departments. This is a recent initiative, which is beginning to support an increasing understanding of standards amongst all teachers. This will support children and young people by clarifying professional judgements and increasing expectations. Going forward, it is key that staff share and support the progression of children and young people across all stages.
- Senior leaders have begun in the past two years to collate evidence of attainment in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. This is providing a system, which will allow them to gather relevant data and analyse trends over time. Senior leaders have not yet gathered and analysed data for attainment across curriculum areas throughout the BGE in both primary and secondary departments. The school is currently unable to provide evidence of attainment over time throughout the BGE.
- Senior leaders and pupil support staff are using data in a way that supports early identification and strategies to support children and young people who are not progressing well in their learning, or face barriers to their learning. This is leading to improved rates of progress across the school.

Senior Phase

- As the number of young people in each school year is small, care has been taken when interpreting and analysing data. In order not to identify any of the small number of young people taking qualifications, HM inspectors have not always used quantitative terms.

Literacy and numeracy

- All young people in S4 from 2016-2019 attained literacy at SCQF level 4 or better. Almost all young people in S4 attained numeracy at SCQF level 4 or better from 2016-2019. Teachers share attainment information with Anderson High School to support progression, subject choice and achievement of aspirations.

- In S4, the school has strong levels of attainment and young people perform consistently well in National Qualifications up to SCQF 5 level. Senior leaders and teachers should now give consideration to presenting young people at SCQF 6 level such as at Higher, where this is appropriate for the individual learner. For a few learners, it may be appropriate for senior leaders and teachers to consider planning two-year courses at National 5 level across Whalsay School and Anderson High School.

Breadth and depth

- In S4, over the past five years, almost all young people attained five or more qualifications at SCQF level 4 or better. Young people are also attaining well at SCQF level 5C or better and overall, the majority attained five or more qualifications at this level from 2014-2019.
- More effective tracking of young people's progress across the school and improvements in progression pathways would support the school in further enhancing the quality of passes in the senior phase.

Achievement

- Young people gain skills and confidence from participating in the wide range of achievement opportunities provided by the school and in the community. Almost all take part in sports groups, clubs and events. All children in P7 take part in the 'Active Schools Playmakers' programme and this starts to build leadership skills. The Sports Ambassadors are developing sports programmes for their peers. The school should continue to further build the role young people play in leading achievement and community activities.
- Children and young people better understand environmental issues through taking part in achievement activities run by partners. Children in the Eco Group do beach and litter cleans and support their peers not to waste energy with their 'green goblin' project. All children in P7 and young people in S2 take part in outdoor education programmes for which they gain John Muir Awards. The activities enable children and young people to build their sense of what they can achieve through an appropriate level of challenge. School staff and partners should consider where else there are opportunities for young people to gain awards for their achievements. This could also support the career ambitions for some young people.
- Several achievement opportunities build children and young people's contribution to and pride in their community and heritage. A popular community café run by school pupils enables young people to gain hospitality, organisational and team-working skills as well as give back to their community. Children learn traditional craft skills and take on leadership roles as part of the PeerieMakkers programme. This effective programme, which started on Whalsay, is now running in schools across Shetland and has international recognition.
- Children and young people increase their understanding of the challenges others face through participation in intergenerational community and achievement activities. The school's partnership with a local care home Fernlea, provides a range of learning opportunities, which benefit children, young people and older adults. Children and young people gain communication skills and understanding of issues such as dementia by interacting with older adults at Fernlea. The care home staff also work with school staff to provide employability focussed opportunities and for a few this supports them to consider a career in the care sector.
- All young people take part in at least one achievement-based activity. The school team track this and put in place support for any young person not participating. Young people use blogs well to capture what achievement activities they participate in and increasingly to reflect on the skills they are gaining. There would be benefit in the school team and key partners working together to improve how well they jointly track achievements and the skills young people are

gaining. This would support them to identify more robustly any individuals or cohorts at risk of underachieving and to plan for skills progression across provision.

Equity for all learners

- Almost all young people reside in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) 7 and 8.
- Senior leaders and pupil support staff are using Pupil Equity Funding to support early interventions for children and young people who are not progressing well in their learning, or face barriers to their learning. Most pupils in targeted groups across the primary and secondary departments are closing key gaps in literacy and numeracy. A few young people have improved their attendance and had fewer referrals for behaviour.
- Upon completion of S4, young people almost always move on to Anderson High School. They report they are confident and feel well prepared for this next stage. In the past, they have also gone into employment or into further education. The school prepares young people well for transition into the next phase of their learning and provides an approach, which is tailored to the career goals of the individual young person. All young people move into positive destinations and have done so over a sustained period of time. This sits above both national and local authority levels.

School Empowerment

- Staff empowerment.
- Partnership working

- Teaching staff feel encouraged and enabled to take forward professional learning and to seek improvements in their practice. All have taken up opportunities for professional learning, including enhancing their leadership capabilities. Staff have shown confidence in designing and delivering relevant, innovative programmes such as engineering and rural skills. The evidence portrays a staff, most of whom feel empowered to take steps to improve the experiences which they offer children and young people. Senior staff should now recognise, and build on, the respect they themselves have earned for the progress they have achieved in the school. That recognition should enhance their confidence and capacity to take on more strategic remits, from early years to S4 and including all aspects of the school's work.
- The school leadership team has a positive and open approach to working with partners. The school community is part of, and embedded in, the wider Whalsay community. In a few cases, formal partnership agreements are in place. In the majority of cases, the partnerships are more informal but remain effective. Feedback from most industry partners is gathered informally and used to inform next steps. Communication is regular and joint planning is evident. There is scope to improve shared evaluation between staff and partners. This would support a greater understanding of which activities have the strongest impacts and add most value.
- Across the curriculum, there are a few employer links, which support well the school's partnership working with local industries. These partnerships have provided useful vocational experience for some young people and enhanced their learning journeys. In line with DYW priorities, the school has signed a successful partnership agreement with Whitefield Croft. This provides opportunities for young people to develop a range of practical rural skills that enhance their employability and career choices. The school also works closely with another major employer in Whalsay, Fernlea Care Home, to provide opportunities for intergenerational learning, as well as employability experiences. The school works well with Developing Shetland's Young Workforce, making good use of services and activities. For example, pupils have participated in the Shetland's school's Bridge Building Challenge, which promotes team-building activities within science, technology, engineering and mathematics. The school works productively with a few industry partners across several curriculum areas.

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.