

# Summarised inspection findings

**Watten Primary School**

The Highland Council

21 November 2023

## Key contextual information

At the time of the inspection, an acting headteacher was newly in post. This was on a temporary basis since the beginning of the session, August 2023. The headteacher has leadership responsibility for both Watten Primary School and Thrumster Primary School. The headteacher is supported by a principal teacher who is based in Thrumster Primary School. The principal teacher has a day a week for her leadership remit across both schools. Her responsibilities include leading on moderation.

The school roll in September 2023 was 37, of whom 21.62% have additional support needs. Attendance is 97.4%. There are no exclusions.

At the time of the inspection, teachers were in post on short-term contracts for one of the classes. There was a vacancy for a teacher of additional support needs, who works across the associated group of schools.

### 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

- Most children are motivated in their learning. Staff and children have revisited the school's values to raise children's engagement with their learning. Across the school, staff relationships with children are supportive and caring. A small minority of children need to demonstrate expected standards of behaviour on a more consistent and independent basis. The acting headteacher should continue to prioritise support assistants' time to helping these children.
- Teachers incorporate children's interests very well in learning. Children and staff have gained the first stage of a three-level national recognition for their work on children's rights. Children are involved in committees to increase their independence in learning and develop decision-making and team-building skills. These committees are designed to develop children's knowledge on sustainability, climate change and the environment, road safety and healthy eating. Children are asked their views. They need clarification on how these views are taken into account.
- Children's learning takes place in a range of environments and with partners. Children learn in the local area and community to build their knowledge and skills in history, music, culture and Scotland's languages. This helps children build their understanding of their local area and identity. Children have opportunities to learn to play musical instruments, which is delivered by Fèis Ròis and Highlife Highland. There is potential to increase children's learning in the outdoors on an ongoing basis, as well as through events and activities.
- Teachers share with children the purpose of learning. They are increasing their discussions with children on what they need to do to be successful. Teachers review lessons with children. They should make more use of the information gathered through these reviews to plan for

future differentiation. Teachers give clear instructions and explanations. Children confidently enquire further to add to their learning. Teachers plan a range of learning and teaching approaches to engage children. They take account of children's individual stages of development in multi-level classes in most curricular areas. On other occasions, teachers set open-ended tasks to take account of a range of abilities. In some cases, a shorter time needs to be allocated to these tasks. Teachers should sharpen their planning for children who need more challenge in their learning. This group of learners' progress needs to be tracked across the school to accelerate progress in raising attainment. Teachers should also ensure that pace of learning is consistently brisk to impact further on children's progress.

- Children are keen to share their ideas and opinions. Teachers use questioning to extend children's thinking. They do not yet ask children to build on the ideas and contributions of others. The younger children enjoy a balance of activities that allows them to work individually, in pairs and in small groups. They stay on task well. The older children work best on tasks individually and in pairs. They need further opportunities to work in groups in a collaborative way.
- Teachers are refreshing their approaches to writing, while working within a progressive curriculum framework. They should assess this change regularly to ensure that changes are leading to improvements. The pace of teaching phonics and spelling strategies needs to be brisker. Further consideration should be given to the progress that children are making at nursery and how long children require to be doing "settling in" tasks.
- Teachers and children make positive use of technology to enhance children's learning. Teachers use interactive boards to help children visualise new learning. Children at all stages use devices confidently to practise skills and consolidate learning. They exercise choice in how they present their learning. Children are confident in using the internet to research. Children's interest in technologies should be developed further, For this, a digital technologies curriculum framework should be used in a progressive way.
- All children access a good range of resources for independent play in the school grounds. They use these resources well. Teachers are developing well play pedagogy in class with the younger children. This promotes creativity, social skills and co-operating in play contexts. Children develop their numeracy skills through the use of the sand tray. Their literacy skills are developed through role-play. As required, children freely add more resources to play contexts, which are changed from day to day. Children need more challenge in aspects of their play. It would be useful to increase adult-initiated activities, interactions and planning of outcomes of play. Teachers should continue to develop progressive play as part of a suite of pedagogies that help children consolidate their learning.
- Children benefit from individualised verbal feedback from teachers. Teachers should build further on effective written feedback. In some examples of writing, teachers' effective feedback focuses on strengths and how to improve writing. Children know the levels at which they work for literacy and numeracy. They have general targets for improvement. Children would benefit from more individual dialogue and feedback on their learning and progress.
- The headteacher has established discussions with teachers for tracking and monitoring children's learning over time. This looks at each individual's progress, sets action points and interventions in literacy and numeracy. In the last year, the headteacher's discussion with teachers has had a focus on all curriculum areas. This focus needs to be sharper in detailing what children will learn and how children apply their learning across the curriculum. Monitoring and tracking could present a more strategic, high-level overview of attainment to be clearer on accelerating progress. This includes for children who require more challenge in their learning,

with view to tracking these children as a group to impact on raising attainment. These children's actual progress needs to be clearer in all tracking processes.

- Teachers plan learning using local authority progression frameworks in literacy and numeracy. They would also benefit from using a full range of longer-term curriculum frameworks to guide learning, teaching, differentiation and assessment.
- Teachers collect data from a range of assessments. This supports professional judgements on achievement of a level and measures individual progress. Pupil support assistants take forward valuable interventions and support for children. Children who need support for their learning have detailed strategies to support their learning. In a few cases, their learning plans are overdue a review.
- Staff are beginning to build their skills in high-quality assessments as part of a local authority strategy. They engage in moderation on standards of achievements with their associated cluster schools and associated school group. Teachers should continue to develop further their understanding of national standards and the National Benchmarks.
- Pupil Equity Funding is used for additional staffing and resources. Children and parents' views are sought on how money is spent on the latter. Pupil Equity Funding is improving attainment for children by having a one-to-one focus on specific gaps in learning.

## 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.

### 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

- At the time of inspection, there were small cohorts of children at each stage of the school roll. As a result, HM Inspectors report attainment and progress as overall statements, rather than for specific year groups.
- Attainment in literacy and numeracy is satisfactory. In 2023, the school's data shows that the majority of children are achieving appropriate Curriculum for Excellence levels in reading, writing and numeracy. Most children are achieving appropriate levels in listening and talking.
- In 2022, most children attained as expected in literacy and numeracy at early level, and the majority at first level. Most children achieved expected levels in literacy at the second level, with the majority in numeracy.
- From year to year, it is not possible to comment on patterns and trends. However, it is clear from the school's tracking of progress that children could be attaining higher. A few children could be exceeding their expected levels. Children could be making more accelerated progress. The local authority meets with the school to support impact towards accelerated progress.

#### Attainment in literacy and English

- Children are making satisfactory progress in literacy and English.

#### Listening and talking

- Almost all children are articulate and use a rich range of vocabulary. They are keen to converse and present information well. Teachers plan interesting themes for children to discuss and share their views. Children are still learning to wait their turn in speaking. They need to fully respect others when making their contributions to a conversation. Children's involvement in performances increases the size of audience to whom they speak.

#### Reading

- Most children read clearly and with expression. They understand the purpose of punctuation. Almost all children enjoy reading and are familiar with the range of texts that they may access. They appreciate the choice of texts in their library, as well as the mobile library service that calls at the school. Children are enthusiastic about a scheme that teachers have introduced to increase their reading of novels. Children need prompted on the specifics of what makes a good book. They should be more independent in reviewing books.

## Writing

- The majority of children write well for a range of purposes. At the early level, the children are mark making, including writing letters and copying sentences that they request. They are ready for more challenge in developing their writing skills. At the first level, children can use sentences that connect and convey message, with full stops and capital letters. In a few cases, children's pace in being independent in writing more legibly could be brisker. The majority of older children are most interested in writing when the purpose and type of writing is very relevant to them. They write clearly and in detail. Children should set themselves higher expectations for spelling, presenting their work and good handwriting.

## Numeracy and mathematics

- Children are making satisfactory progress in numeracy. It is clear from the school's tracking of progress that children's progress could be brisker.

## Number, money and measure

- Children are aware of the benefits in having strong numeracy skills and the related career opportunities. The younger children are sequencing numbers accurately within ten. They identify a few coins and understand the concept of giving change. Children are developing well concepts of time. They should be consistently dating their own work to integrate their skills in authentic activities. The older children accurately solve problems involving numbers and are increasingly confident in explaining how they have done this. They use their knowledge well of equivalent forms of common fractions, decimal fractions and percentages to solve problems in everyday contexts. They are clear on time and can calculate duration of activities and events. Their mental agility could be sharper.

## Shape, position and movement

- Children identify a range of two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects, as appropriate to their stage. They can identify symmetry in a range of contexts. The older children are yet to develop some specific vocabulary, such as that associated with circles.

## Information handling

- Children engage in some collecting, organising and displaying of data. They can talk about what makes data reliable or otherwise. Children's information handling skills should be more visible in their evidence of work and wall displays.

## Attainment over time

- Senior leaders and teachers have data for attainment and progress over time in literacy and numeracy. They are also beginning to build data using national wellbeing indicators. Senior leaders should now consider tracking attainment over time in all curricular areas. Children receiving specific interventions are making progress within their targets. Across the school, more than a few children are capable of making greater progress from their prior levels of attainment. The school is soon to have stability in teaching staffing. This should be an impetus for building further on strengths in attainment and targeting further areas needing to be improved.

## Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Children participate in a range of opportunities for personal achievements. They are beginning to talk about the resultant skills and capacities they develop. Children develop empathy for others through raising money for charities. The acting headteacher has collected data on children's achievements out with school. These are celebrated in school. This overview is starting to be used to monitor that no child has a gap in opportunities. Children and staff are having to move their profiling of achievements from a digital platform. As they migrate their

profiling, they should ensure that children's progress in developing skills and capacities is clearer to children and their families.

### **Equity for all learners**

- Senior leaders and staff are aware of their rural context. They have reviewed what closing gaps in attainment means to their location. Senior leaders and staff are starting to use specific funding for closing the attainment gap to positive effect.
- The Parent Council supports the school very well with funding, including by eliciting support from local businesses. Their funding enables free travel for activities and events, and to purchase additional resources, such as for play. The headteacher should continue to ensure that there is no cost to the school day.
- Children benefit from learning with other rural schools. This ensures equity in participating in sports events. Children have early residential transition activities so that they foster friendships with peers in other rural schools as they move to Wick High School. This is increasing children's confidence.
- Children in primary one to primary three have a shorter school day than the older children. This should be reviewed in the pursuit of equity and excellence.



## Other relevant evidence

- Senior leaders need to provide clarity to parents and children on the role of homework.
- Staffing vacancies should be filled, including for a teacher of support for learning.
- Children receive two-hours of physical education based on the experiences and outcomes of Curriculum for Excellence.
- The older children learn French. All children are learning some Caithness Scots through musical festivals and other events. Fèis Ròis embed some Gaelic language within the music tuition they deliver in the school. Senior leaders should plan further a coherent curriculum pathway in learning these additional languages. Children would benefit from more learning on how Scotland's languages are an important part of their identity.

## 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.