

# Summarised inspection findings

**Kirkhill Primary School**

The Highland Council

1 April 2025

## Key contextual information

Kirkhill Primary School is set in the small village of Kirkhill, west of Inverness. The school caters for children from Kirkhill, Inchmore, Lentrane, Drumchardine, Cabrich, Knockbain, Bunchrew, Clunes and Newtonhill. Currently, 133 children attend the school organised across six classes. The school also has a nursery class. The headteacher has been in post since 2016 and has a teaching commitment of 0.3 FTE. She also manages the day to day leadership of the nursery. She is supported by two principal teachers who job share one post. They are class committed with one shared afternoon out of class a week for leadership responsibilities. The majority of children reside in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) 6. In the school 33% of children require additional support with learning.

### 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 headteacher and staff have created a calm and welcoming environment where all children are nurtured. Staff and children experience positive relationships which is evident in daily interactions. They are proud of their work on embedding the language of children's rights into learning and school life. Together, they have developed helpful class charters and link this work effectively to their school values. This is supporting most children to behave well and show care and consideration for each other. Where a few children become dysregulated at times, staff and children manage this sensitively. This ensures there are minimal disruptions to class learning. Staff's calm and caring approach enables children to access the support they need to re-engage appropriately with learning.
- In most lessons, teachers use a range of teaching approaches to engage children purposefully in learning. In these lessons, children have opportunities for choice and work collaboratively in groups and pairs to learn. Children enjoy talking about their learning and teachers consider children's views well when planning learning. However, in a few lessons, the learning is too teacher led, and the pace of learning is too slow. As a result, a few children become distracted from learning and learning time is lost. Teachers should continue to reflect on learning and teaching and agree consistent approaches to delivering high quality learning experiences across all lessons. This has the potential to support all children to maximise their progress.
- In most lessons, teachers plan literacy and numeracy at the right level of difficulty for most children. A few children experience additional challenge in learning by supporting others, leading learning or in following individual programmes of work. However, across the school, a few children could be making even better progress. In a few lessons, teachers should provide greater challenge and depth in learning, particularly in numeracy. In most lessons, the purpose of learning is shared, and children understand how to be successful in learning. Teachers should now support children to use the language of learning more often in class. This includes,

for example, during plenaries to help children to have a clearer understanding of the intended learning.

- In most lessons, teachers' instructions are clear. They use questions well to check for children's understanding. A few teachers use high-quality questions to extend and deepen children's thinking. This is not yet consistent across all classes. Teachers provide useful verbal and written feedback to support children to know how to improve their work, for example, in writing. Children and teachers create learning targets which are beginning to help children to understand their next steps in learning. These are captured in children's learning profiles and reviewed termly. Teachers should now support children to refer back to targets and feedback more regularly. This should support all children to have a clearer understanding of their progress and how to improve their work.
- Children at the early stages have well-considered opportunities to learn through play. Teachers engage with professional learning to support them to develop play pedagogy. They have created an inviting environment incorporating children's interests and current learning. Staff refresh areas regularly to support children to be creative and curious. Teachers observe learning regularly and use observations to add additional resources to extend learning. A few children become disengaged at times during extended free play experiences. Teachers should continue to engage with professional learning and review their approaches regularly. This will help to ensure all children are fully engaged and appropriately challenged in these learning experiences.
- All teachers provide children with regular opportunities to use digital technology to effectively enhance and support learning. Teachers follow a digital progressive pathway which supports children to develop skills in digital learning and to use technology across the curriculum. All children in P5-7 have an individual device which they use competently to access planned learning, educational games, reading and numeracy tasks. A few children use speech to text to enable them to be more independent in learning. In a few classes, children use programmable devices to learn coding skills and pupil digital leaders support peers to improve their digital skills.
- Teachers and support staff skilfully support children who require help with learning. Staff are creative in how they engage children in learning tasks, for example, using outdoor learning and practical activities to help children to stay focused. Staff also use literacy, numeracy and wellbeing interventions effectively to meet children's needs. For a few children this is helping them to close gaps in learning.
- The headteacher has an effective system for tracking and monitoring children's progress and attainment. All teachers use the system to record children's progress in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing as well as their achievements. Teachers and senior leaders engage in regular pupil progress meetings to identify any children who may require further support or challenge in learning.
- Teachers use a variety of assessment approaches well throughout the year as clearly planned out in the assessment calendar. They use summative and formative assessments in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing to add rigour to their professional judgement of children's progress and attainment. Teachers are beginning to engage with high-quality assessments to assess a variety of subject areas across the curriculum. These assessments are at the early stages of tracking children's knowledge, understanding and application of skills across the four contexts of learning. The headteacher and teachers should now work together to further develop and embed high-quality assessments into the school's assessment approach.

- Teachers engage in moderation activities through informal discussions with stage partners and formal meetings in school or with colleagues in the learning community. Staff value this opportunity to discuss children's progress and attainment. This is increasing their confidence further in the reliability of teacher professional judgements in literacy and numeracy. Senior leaders and staff should now build on these positive approaches to moderation in a range of curricular areas.
- The headteacher and teachers introduced a comprehensive planning approach and clear expectations of planning for all staff. Teachers use progressive frameworks well to plan for all areas of the curriculum, ensuring that the children experience a broad general education. Teachers are beginning to plan interdisciplinary learning using a new project-based learning approach called 'Quests.' This is leading to an increasing number of opportunities for children to contribute to the planning of their learning. A few children plan other areas of the curriculum with the teacher. This includes, physical education, where a few children share their special interest and skills within the subject by teaching the class. This approach is highly motivating and helps to engage all children in the lesson.
- The headteacher and teachers use data well in progress meetings to review the learning targets of the class and individuals. This is resulting in a shared understanding of barriers to learning and how to support children's progress universally and through targeted support. Staff support children who require additional support with their learning well. They help them to engage purposefully and make appropriate progress 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.

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**

- Most children in P1 achieve expected Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels in literacy and almost all achieve expected levels in numeracy. In P4, most children achieve expected CfE levels in reading and listening and talking and the majority achieve expected levels in writing and numeracy. In P7, most children achieve expected CfE levels in reading, listening and talking and numeracy. The majority achieve national expected levels in writing.
- Most children who require support with their learning make good progress towards their own targets.

### **Attainment in literacy and English**

- Across the school, most children make good progress in literacy and English.

### **Listening and talking**

- Across the school most children listen and respond appropriately to others. They are confident to share ideas and show respect to the views of others. At early level most children enjoy discussing stories and answering questions. At first level most children communicate clearly and audibly and discuss the main features of a text. At second level most children answer questions, clarify points and support the ideas or opinions of others. Across the school, children need support to take turns when talking and listening to each other.

### **Reading**

- At early level most children read familiar words with increasing fluency. They use context clues to support reading and make predictions. They should be supported to blend sounds to read an increasing number of words. At first level most children demonstrate knowledge of the features of fiction and non-fiction texts. They should now focus on developing skills to answer inferential questions about texts. At second level most children identify the writer's style and use of language. A few children identify techniques to influence the reader such as emotive language. They would benefit from opportunities to read more challenging texts and a wider range of authors and genres.

### **Writing**

- At early level most children write the initial sounds they have learned. They are beginning to blend sounds and write independently. They should be supported to write simple sentences with a capital letter and full stop. At first level most children use punctuation correctly and write with increasing independence. They should be encouraged to check over their work for accuracy and to add more detail to writing. At second level the majority of children use paragraphs well to structure their writing. They edit their writing to make improvements. Most children understand the features of different genres. They should now be supported to apply

these in their own writing. A few children make good use of digital technology to express their ideas and extend their writing.

### **Numeracy and mathematics**

- Across the school, most children make good progress in numeracy and mathematics. A few children would benefit from further challenge in learning to make even better progress.

### **Number, money and measure**

- At early level most children count confidently forwards and backwards to 10 and a few children count beyond 20. They calculate doubles within 10 accurately and work out the missing numbers within 20. They use concrete materials to support number work and enjoy exploring number games through play. They are less confident in their knowledge of coins and money. At first level the majority of children use a written method to solve addition and subtraction calculations accurately. They use a range of units to measure length and are learning how to calculate area using multiplication. They need to develop their knowledge of telling the time using analogue clocks. At second level most children understand place value well. They explain the strategies they use to solve a number question. They are developing well their knowledge of fractions and percentages and how to convert between the two. They would benefit from further opportunities to solve more complex two-step problems.

### **Shape, position and movement**

- At early level most children use directional language well, including in front of, behind and forwards to play a simple game. They recognise two-dimensional shapes and create simple patterns using shapes. At first level most children identify right angles and are developing an increasing awareness of a range of angles. At second level children have a confident knowledge of a range of angles. Children at all levels need further opportunities to explore three-dimensional objects and their properties.

### **Information handling**

- At early level children match objects based on size, colour and shape. They explain about the most and least popular pet on a pictorial bar graph. At first level most children use tally marks to record and collate data. They answer questions accurately from a bar graph about the difference between the most and least popular. At second level most children are confident in using bar graphs and pie charts to share information. A few children use digital technology well to display information on house points gained. They need to use a wider range of diagrams, charts and graphs to present data they have collated.

### **Attainment over time**

- The headteacher reviews children's progress regularly with teachers. Staff gather a range of data over time, including from assessments, intervention data and children's work. The headteacher is aware there are a few dips in attainment over time for a few cohorts. However, she has a clear understanding of the reasons for these dips. As a result, staff plan appropriate universal and targeted interventions for identified cohorts and individuals.
- School data shows clearly the progress classes and individual children are making in literacy and numeracy as they move through the school. As a next step, senior leaders should review the attainment data over time more robustly. This will support them to consider trends and potential gaps for cohorts of children and use this to further raise attainment in literacy and numeracy.
- The headteacher follows the local authority attendance policy. Attendance for last year was 94%, which is an increase from the previous year and above the national average. The headteacher supports a few families where children's attendance has fallen. Staff introduced

individualised support for individual children and families. These include working with partners to support children and families, regular visits from a therapy dog and opportunities for activities beyond the school. These approaches have been successful in supporting a few children to attend school more regularly. The headteacher makes all parents aware of the impact of reduced attendance on children's progress. Currently a few children attend school on a part-time timetable as a short-term measure. This is agreed in partnership with families and other agencies and is working well to support a few children to attend school. This is reviewed regularly, with a careful plan to extend children's time in school in a timely manner.

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

- Staff provide children with meaningful activities to develop a range of skills and attributes as they move through the school. Children are encouraged to share achievements from out with school, which include sporting, musical and artistic talents. All achievements are celebrated on the 'we're flying high' board and at weekly assemblies. This helps children to feel proud of their own and each other's success.
- All children in P4-P7 are involved in pupil groups to improve the school. These include digital leaders, sustainability, reading and pupil council. Children create action plans with their ideas, supported by teachers. This is helping children to understand the contribution they make to school life and to develop a range of skills. For example, they practise skills in collaboration, innovation, confidence and creativity as they plan events. These include competitions, reading events or teaching peers' skills in digital technology.
- Staff plan relevant trips to extend children's learning beyond the classroom. These include a residential trip, regular outdoor learning and visits linked to project work. Staff work closely with the local community and partners to engage children in local events, quizzes and fundraising. These experiences effectively build children's confidence and help them value their place in the community.
- Teachers record children's achievements in learning journals to support children to build on skills as they move through the school. They have begun to track children's achievements which is supporting staff to ensure no child misses out. It helps staff to identify new clubs or activities which link to children's interests and skills. Staff use their skills framework well to support children to understand the different skills they are developing.

### **Equity for all learners**

- All staff have a clear understanding of the socio-economic circumstances of children and families. The headteacher works together with the Parent Council to reduce the costs of trips and events for families. Staff provide pre-loved uniforms and a free snack basket for children. The headteacher should now work with partners and parents to consider how they can reduce the cost of the school day even more.
- The headteacher uses Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) effectively to employ additional staffing. Staff provide literacy, numeracy and wellbeing interventions for identified children. Staff have data to show the positive impact of literacy and numeracy interventions. They evidence that interventions are supporting identified children to close gaps in reading and numeracy.



## Other relevant evidence

- Children experience two hours of high-quality physical education each week.
- The recently refreshed school library has a wide choice of books for all stages and is used well by children across the school. Children also access attractive class reading areas.
- Children across the school learn French and children in P5 and P7 also learn Gaelic. Children give a few details of their learning of Gaelic. Teachers should continue to encourage children to acquire Gaelic (Learners). The school's handbook fulfils statutory guidance in promoting Gàidhlig (Gaelic) Medium Education. The handbook should also include the learning pathway for Gaelic (Learners) from Kirkhill Primary School to Charlestown Academy.
- The headteacher has a significant teaching commitment over the week. She also manages the day to day leadership of the nursery. Her leadership and support to the staff team has made a highly positive impact to the work of the school and children's outcomes. The headteacher should continue to work with the local authority to ensure her management commitments are sustainable. This will help to ensure there is capacity to drive forward further school improvement.

## 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.