

# Summarised inspection findings

**Spean Bridge Primary School**

The Highland Council

12 September 2023

## Key contextual information

Spean Bridge Primary School is situated near the town of Fort William. The current roll of 101 pupils consists of 51 boys and 50 girls. The headteacher is supported by an acting principal teacher. In the school, 45% of children live in areas within the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) decile 8. No children reside in SIMD deciles 1 to 4. There are four multi-stage classes in the school across all stages from primary 1 to primary 7. The school has had significant staffing challenges in the past 12 months due to staff planned and unplanned absences.

### 2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

**weak**

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

- Overall, quality of learning, teaching and assessment is weak. All staff, in collaboration with the local authority, need to take action to improve the quality of children's experiences.
- Staff develop positive relationships across the school, which results in a caring and supportive ethos. They support children well and care about their wellbeing this supports children to feel safe in school. Almost all children are friendly, polite, interact well with staff and are proud of their school.
- The majority of teachers create bright and attractive classrooms. They display children's work which gives them a sense of pride in their achievements. Children learn both indoors and outdoors and make use of an inviting 'Discovery Zone' open area. Children are beginning to develop self-confidence and resilience through outdoor learning. Senior leaders should continue to build on this work by supporting children to further understand the key skills they are developing through these experiences as children are not sufficiently clear about the skills they are developing.
- In a few classes, children benefit from lessons which are structured and organised. The majority of children in these classes are motivated and engaged in their learning. This is not yet consistent across the school. In a few classes, children are clear on what they are learning and what they need to do to improve. As an important next step, teachers should now consistently highlight the purpose of each lesson and closely with children to identify how to complete activities successfully. This should be clearly linked to skills and prior learning to support children's progress.
- Overall, the quality of teaching across the school is not consistent. Senior leaders should work together with staff to identify and share effective practice of teaching and learning approaches. In a minority of classes, teachers provide opportunities for children to personalise their learning and make choices. Across the school, children participate in paired work, supporting each other well. Most lessons are teacher-led with too much emphasis on whole class activities and learning experiences. Teachers should ensure all children have more regular opportunities to lead their own learning to support their increased

independence. In the majority of lessons, the pace of lessons is too slow. Teachers should engage children more actively in their learning and set a brisker pace. This will ensure that children experience more quality time on task and are engaged by a more suitable pace.

- The needs of children are currently not well met. Teachers need to ensure that learning activities are set at the right level for all children. They identify children who require targeted support. Current interventions and class-based supports do not fully address children's specific barriers to learning. A significant minority of children require more challenge in their learning in order to reach their full potential and make better progress. Teachers need to further support children in class to meet their learning needs more effectively.
- Digital technologies to support learning are currently limited in the school. In a few lessons, children use digital technologies to support their learning. Children can use a variety of digital tools independently such as apps, tablets and laptops. Teachers use digital devices in a few classes to support learning experiences and assess children's learning. Teachers should now support children to develop their digital skills and apply these in meaningful real-life contexts.
- Teachers working at the early stages in the school are introducing a play-based approach to support children's learning. Young children are enthusiastic when given opportunities to learn through play. Staff should develop and share their understanding and approaches to play, taking account of national practice guidance. This will support progressive learning experiences across levels and allow young children regular opportunities to lead their learning.
- In a minority of lessons, teachers provide clear instructions and explanations. A minority of teachers use questioning to consolidate learning. Staff should work to further develop their questioning skills to encourage and develop children's higher order thinking skills across all stages. All teachers provide feedback to children, both verbally and in their jotters. A minority of children are supported to provide peer feedback in jotters and verbally to peers. Teachers should now collaborate to further develop this work.
- Teachers plan and make use of assessments within children's reading, writing and numeracy learning. This includes standardised assessments, at key milestones and through the Scottish National Standardised Assessments (SNSA). Teachers are beginning to gather a range of evidence about children's progress in learning. This evidence includes key assessment tasks which are shared with parents. Teachers are beginning to better engage with the National Benchmarks for Curriculum for Excellence (CFE). Senior leaders and staff should develop a consistent agreed approach to assessing children's progress across the curriculum. Staff need to use the information gathered from assessments more effectively to plan children's next steps in learning.
- Across the school, staff develop and use a range of approaches which supports their planning. This includes using local authority progression pathways and termly planning overviews. Senior leaders should support staff to agree and implement a clearer, consistent approach which supports children to make better progress. This should include streamlining the numbers of resources used to deliver the curriculum, particularly in numeracy and mathematics.
- Senior leaders and teachers track children's progress across literacy and numeracy and are at the early stages of tracking children's wellbeing. The headteacher and class teachers have regular meetings which help to identify children who require additional support with their learning. These meetings are not yet rigorous enough when monitoring attainment and do not yet impact on the progress of individual children and groups. Teachers need to more

closely track and evidence the progress children are making, including those who require additional challenge or support. This will help all staff to have a more robust understanding of progress and attainment.

- Teachers work with colleagues from across the 'Area Schools Group' to discuss standards of children's writing. This is beginning to support their professional judgement of children's achievement of a level in writing. Teachers are developing their confidence and accuracy when making professional judgements about children's levels of attainment in literacy and numeracy and mathematics. They now require opportunities for moderation in areas beyond writing to support their shared understanding of national standards.

## 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

weak

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, children's attainment in literacy and numeracy is weak. Children are not making sufficient progress in their learning, particularly at early and first level.

### Attainment in literacy and English

- Children working at the early and first level are not making appropriate progress across reading, writing, listening, and talking. Children working towards the end of second level are making satisfactory progress in literacy.

### Listening and talking

- Across early and first level, the majority of children listen and take turns appropriately during discussions. A minority of children are less confident in making eye contact with others or responding appropriately or respectfully to their ideas or questions. At second level, most children express their views and listen to the opinions of others. They can identify the difference between fact and opinion and can outline the skills required to be a good listener. Children at second level are less confident in building and developing on the ideas of others or asking appropriate questions. Across first and second level, children have very limited experience in notetaking when listening, planning and giving presentations. Taking the lead in discussions and debates and engaging in opportunities to construct and deliver presentations would be an important next step. Staff should now ensure these skills are taught regularly, providing opportunities for children to apply these skills across different contexts.

### Reading

- Almost all children at early and first level are able to share ideas about books they have read from their class library and at home. A few children at early level can use the terms author and illustrator correctly. Children will benefit from reading a broader range of authors and genres to extend their skills. At first level, a minority of children are building confidence and fluency when tackling unseen texts. Most children require further practice understanding and using punctuation appropriately when reading aloud. By the end of second level, almost all children are able to discuss favourite books, authors and genres which they enjoy. The majority of children can discuss the differences between books and film adaptations. They can identify techniques used to influence the reader and share thoughts and main ideas about structure, characters and setting. They will benefit significantly from further practice creating different types of questions to show their understanding of texts and from exploring, investigating and questioning sources of information.

### Writing

- By the end of early level, most children are beginning to form letters correctly and understand that sentences start with a capital letter and end with a full stop. They will require further practice writing independently. At first level, children write stories, reports and to share

experiences. The majority do not yet apply their knowledge of spelling strategies to less common words. Most children need to understand and use of a wider range of conjunctions to develop their writing. At second level, the majority of children write well for a range of audiences. They are beginning to develop interesting characters, settings and descriptive language. Across the school, children require further experiences to apply their writing skills across the curriculum and to real-life and meaningful contexts. They will benefit from writing more regularly to explain processes, to persuade the reader and to write imaginatively and creatively, including poetry.

## **Numeracy and mathematics**

- Overall, attainment in numeracy and mathematics is weak. By the end of early level, most children are not confident with basic concepts. Across first level, most children are not making sufficient progress with key areas, such as fractions and money.

## **Number, money and measure**

- By the end of early level, a minority of children add and subtract mentally within 10 with confidence. The majority of children count forward and backwards in sequences to 20 and a few can go beyond. Children require further practice identifying missing numbers in a sequence, including identification of numbers before and after. Additionally, they should develop their mental processes to demonstrate a sound understanding of numbers. At first level, the minority of children can solve simple problems and identify the strategies they use. They will benefit from further support with place value. At early and first level, children are not yet confident in their understanding of fractions when they need to explain simple mathematical processes to demonstrate their understanding. At second level, children multiply and divide whole numbers by multiples of 10, 100 and 1,000. They understand costs and can work with a simple budget. They are less confident and accurate when multiplying three and four-digit numbers. At second level, most children require further practice applying mental strategies to solve open-ended problems.

## **Shape, position and movement**

- Within early level, most children correctly use positional terms, such as in front of, behind and under and can identify two-dimensional shapes. At first level, a majority of children name an increasing range of two-dimensional shapes and are developing their vocabulary to describe their features. By the end of first level, children are not confident understanding and identifying right angles. At second level, a minority of children use mathematical language to describe and classify a range of angles identified within shapes. They identify and illustrate line symmetry in a range of two-dimensional shapes. They require further support understanding the radius and diameter of circles.

## **Information handling**

- Across early and first levels, there is currently insufficient evidence of children's learning or skills in this area. By the end of second level, the majority of children demonstrate knowledge of a few aspects of information handling. They understand how to create bar graphs and tables to present information and can interpret these, demonstrating their understanding that numbers can be represented in a variety of ways to solve problems. They are not yet confident with ideas of probability and chance. There is scope for children at this level to develop the skill of determining the reasonableness of a solution as well as using estimation as a possible strategy for problem solving. At all stages and across a range of meaningful contexts, children need more regular practice collecting, presenting and interpreting information. This should include using digital technologies.

## **Attainment over time**

- Senior leaders have collated and monitored attainment information over the past three years. This data shows that children's attainment levels are not consistent and rise and fall over time.

Senior leaders and staff are aware of the need to improve children's progress and attainment in literacy and numeracy, particularly at early and first level. Senior leaders and staff need to track systematically and analyse the attainment of specific groups and cohorts, including those with additional support needs. This will support them to accurately identify trends in attainment over time and direct action to where it is most needed.

- Children are currently not receiving their entitlement to the full broad general education. This is negatively impacting on children's ability to achieve and attain across the curriculum.

### **Overall quality of learner's achievements**

- Children have opportunities to experience a range of activities, including recognised national activity groups, rugby, shinty, athletics and traditional music. Sport is a strong feature of Spean Bridge Primary School and most children enjoy opportunities to participate in physical activities, particularly outdoors. A few children play competitive netball regularly through a school club. Through these experiences children develop skills, such as teamwork and problem solving. A recent outward-bound experience helped children to develop skills in communication and to see things from others' perspective. Parents have expressed their enthusiasm to volunteer their skills and provide opportunities for children beyond and within the school day to support the school's work in this area. Staff should support children to understand the skills they are developing through their achievements. This will help them to recognise and value their growing skills. Staff do not yet record and track children's achievements. This would allow the school to identify and support those children who may be at risk of missing out.

### **Equity for all learners**

- Pupil Equity Funding is used to provide a range of interventions for children who require additional support. This includes the provision of additional staffing and resources to particularly support numeracy and health and wellbeing. Children value these supports. It is not yet clear how these interventions are closing the attainment gap. Senior leaders need to develop robust measures and approaches to monitor progress of children with identified barriers to their learning. This information will help staff to ensure targeted supports are accelerating progress and improving outcomes for all children.
- Staff have deep knowledge of their children and families and how they may be impacted by the cost of living crisis. To ensure all children access their education equitably and with dignity, a clothing swap shop allows families to have school uniforms with no cost. Parents report that this is supportive and is particularly helpful to those families with more than one child attending school. Staff should consider providing a breakfast or snack where needed to support the wellbeing of all children and their readiness to learn.



## Other relevant information

- Following the return to school after periods of remote learning, school staff adapted curriculum delivery to focus more on literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Senior leaders should now widen the curriculum on offer to ensure that all children receive their entitlement to a full broad general education.

## 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.