

# Summarised inspection findings

**Macmerry Primary School and Nursery Class**

East Lothian Council

17 September 2019

## Key contextual information

Macmerry Primary School is a non-denominational primary school serving the village of Macmerry and the surrounding rural area. There are six composite classes ranging from P1-P7 and a nursery setting within the school. The current school roll is 121 children and 30 children in the nursery.

### 1.3 Leadership of change

weak

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

- The acting headteacher was appointed in October 2018 and with the support of all staff has created a caring environment. Parents and partners speak very positively about the welcoming and supportive environment created by her and the staff at Macmerry Primary School. Most parents report that their child likes being at school and feel comfortable approaching the school with questions or suggestions for improvement.
- The whole school values were created in collaboration with children, parents and partners. The three key values have hashtags attached and were designed to make them relevant to learners. They are; #macmerrypupilssucceed, #choosekindness and #bestyoucanbe. The values are promoted well by classrooms and corridors displays, shared on the school's website and through regular newsletters. A few examples of these values were observed in classroom practice. The whole school values are not sufficiently understood by children, parents and staff. An important next step would be to revisit these values with all stakeholders, reinforce their relevance in everyday classroom activities and embed these across the school.
- Staff know the children and families well. They have a good understanding of the socio-economic context of the school and local community and are aware of the need to ensure equity for all children. The school improvement plan (SIP) makes reference to how the school intends to use Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) to support improvement. There is a lack of detail on how interventions have been chosen, staff responsibilities and how the impact of interventions will be measured. There is a need to provide more detail on how interventions will be delivered and monitored. This should include clearer statements regarding focus, measures and impact of chosen interventions.
- With support from the local authority, all staff are working to establish a nurturing approach across all classes. A revised behaviour policy was written in consultation with the parent council was implemented in August 2018. This policy and these approaches are not yet sufficiently understood by all staff. These approaches are not improving the environment for learning in class. Class teachers and learning assistants require further support and direction to ensure that they have a clear understanding of appropriate strategies to employ to enable effective teaching and learning to take place.

- Staff need to ensure that agreed strategies to support teaching and learning impact effectively and improve outcomes for children. Commendably, all staff take after school clubs and lead developments across the school. A few of these developments are having a positive impact on raising attainment, such as, the refreshed approaches to teaching numeracy. Senior leaders need to support further those staff leading on whole school developments. This should include developing more robust approaches to self-evaluation, measuring the impact of new initiatives on outcomes for children and sharing good practice more widely across the school.
- All teaching staff lead on an area for improvement, including, digital profiling, numeracy and literacy. Senior leaders with support from the local authority have identified strategies to improve attainment in numeracy. These are providing children with opportunities to discuss and identify efficient ways to complete basic calculations. Despite best efforts and during a period of change in senior leadership the impact of a few of these developments has been less than anticipated.
- Senior leaders now need to provide clearer strategic direction in order to lead change within the school. They need to work with staff to establish and develop guidance which results in high quality, consistent learning and teaching approaches across all classes. Senior leaders acknowledge that significant work is required to engage staff in moderation both in school and within the local cluster. They recognise this has the potential to improve the robustness of teacher judgements and provide a shared understanding of achievement of Curriculum for Excellence levels.
- The acting headteacher has established productive working relationships across and beyond the school community. Improving partnerships, particularly around cluster group working on Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) and literacy are starting to show early impact on improving outcomes for children. However, there has been insufficient time for these partnership activities to evidence measurable change. Almost all partners feel that their contribution is valued by staff in the school and that the acting headteacher actively pursues new opportunities when they arise. We have discussed with senior leaders the need to improve arrangements to evaluate the impact of partnership working on children's learning.
- Children engage in leadership opportunities including the pupil council, buddy system and organising sporting activities. At present, there are insufficient opportunities for children to be involved in leading change within the school. Senior leaders have piloted the use of How Good is our School? with P6 children. This is providing children and staff with the opportunity to become involved in self-evaluation and school improvement activities. Embedding this approach across all classes has the potential to ensure that children can express their views and believe that their views will be taken into account in order to impact positively on school improvement.

## 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

- Staff at Macmerry Primary School are developing positive, nurturing relationships with learners. This is being developed further by the introduction of classroom charters and a playground charter based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The majority of children engage well with their learning activities and are motivated to learn and achieve. They work well together in pairs and small groups and are developing their skills in working cooperatively. Whilst learning environments are stimulating, there is scope to display more examples of children's work in order to celebrate their achievements and motivate them further to produce high quality pieces of work.
- In the majority of lessons, learning is well-planned and based on relevant tasks. Teachers' plans are monitored appropriately by senior leaders and are given constructive feedback and helpful suggestions. In most lessons observed, teachers share the purpose of lessons and explain what children are required to do to be successful. A next step should be for the children to be involved more fully in considering what they are required to do to be successful learners. Learning activities match the needs of the majority of children and differentiation is evident in lessons and follow up tasks. Most children listen well to their teachers and a few need to develop their skills in listening to each other. A few children at the early primary stages need more opportunities to share resources and take turns in groups.
- In a few lessons observed, children's learning experiences are affected adversely by low level disruptive behaviour. In order to reduce this level of disruption, the school should ensure that new positive behaviour approaches are fully implemented and shared with parents. Also, individual support plans should be implemented consistently to enable all learners to engage fully in learning. Points of transition across the school day, for example when children are moving around the school building, should be more carefully managed so that the children are quickly settled and ready to learn.
- Children in P4 - P7, children are beginning to use digital technologies to record their personal learning journey and to record their own achievements and these are shared with parents. Across the school, there is a need to develop further children's ability to set targets to help them to understand and take ownership of what they need to do to improve. They also need to take increasing responsibility for their learning and develop greater independence.
- Most staff make use of digital technologies as a feature of their teaching, but do not as yet involve children enough in using computers and other digital devices as a regular, core part of their learning. Further use of a variety of digital technologies should be used to enhance learning experiences and motivate children. .
- The majority of lessons observed are too teacher-directed and limit opportunities for children's choice and independence. Overall, children need to be given opportunities to make more

choices and take a greater lead in their learning. Teachers should ensure that children receive high quality feedback about their learning so that they know their next steps for improvement. A few teachers provide helpful feedback to children about their writing, including next steps for improvement. This practice should be implemented by all teachers so that the children know what they need to do to improve their writing. Teachers should continue to develop the use of questioning skills so that the children's higher order thinking skills can be developed.

- Teachers are at the early stages of planning assessments as part of learning and teaching. Overall, the school's approaches to assessment are not yet fully developed or sufficiently aligned to Curriculum for Excellence standards and expectations. Staff have made an early start to developing a deeper understanding of assessment and moderation. They would benefit from participating in further moderation activities with other schools in order to set standards. Staff need to continue to develop their knowledge and skills, for example to judge when children achieve a level. An agreed whole school approach to assessment and moderation, which consistently evidences breadth, challenge and application is required in order to set standards and to raise aspirations.
- Teachers have recently begun to engage with the National Benchmarks for literacy and numeracy. They need to continue with their plans to deepen their understanding of the National Benchmarks to support them when planning for progression in learning and to make more robust assessments of children's progress. The school needs to have a more rigorous approach to track and monitor children's progress in their learning.

## 2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- Overall there is scope to improve the curriculum across the school. A clear curriculum rationale, which reflects the unique context of the school community and the school's vision, values and aims, has not yet been developed in collaboration with children, staff, parents and partners.
- The school has local authority learning pathways in place for all curricular areas. These pathways are based on the experiences and outcomes of Curriculum for Excellence and the National Benchmarks. There is a need to develop further staff understanding of these learning pathways, particularly for curricular areas outwith literacy and numeracy. Staff do not yet have a full enough understanding of interdisciplinary learning (IDL) to ensure a collegiate understanding of how links can be made across the full range of children's learning experiences. Senior leaders also needs to develop further flexible learning pathways for all children in order to meet their needs effectively.
- The school is at the early stages of developing a planned progressive pathway for digital technology skills. Despite children experiencing word processing, researching, practising literacy and numeracy skills and the use of interactive whiteboards, their skills are not yet being developed fully as part of a planned progression of skills.
- Children in P1 - P7 enjoy learning French as part of the 1+2 approaches to modern languages. Staff have had the opportunity to visit France through ERASMUS funding and as a result of their experience children are very interested in learning languages. They have expressed a particular interest in developing their language skills in Spanish and German.
- Outdoor learning is at an early stage of development with all classes having regular access to the school grounds for both curricular and physical activity. The programme of outdoor activities should be reviewed to ensure that it builds on prior learning and enhances the delivery of the curriculum.
- Children benefit from the statutory two hours of quality physical exercise on a weekly basis.
- Science is an area of the curriculum which has been well-developed by the acting headteacher in partnership with cluster schools. Almost all staff report increased confidence when delivering science lessons and children's team working skills are developing well during science activities. This should now be linked to developing skills for learning, life and work, which is an area of the curriculum requiring further development.
- There is a well-planned transition programme in place both from early years into P1 and P7 to Ross High School. Children from the P7 focus group spoke enthusiastically and confidently about moving to secondary school and commented on feeling prepared for the new challenges that moving into S1 will bring. Also, effective enhanced transition arrangements are in place for those children requiring extra support.

## 2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- See choice Quality Indicator

## 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 education authority.



### 3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

weak

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

- Most children say that staff treat them well. As a result, the majority of children feel safe in the school and that they have someone they can talk to about a worry or concern. The recent introduction of emotional check-ins, is a positive example of children beginning to learn to talk about their emotions. In a few classes, children are aware of how their feelings can impact on their ability to learn.
- The majority of children are not familiar with the wellbeing indicators. All children should be supported to develop a deeper understanding of these indicators so that they set their own meaningful, individual targets. They should be supported to understand the relevance of the indicators and to discuss wellbeing with confidence.
- Children are at the early stages of understanding the UNCRC. Staff should now strengthen connections for the children between these charters and the UNCRC so that they can discuss their implications confidently and understand their relevance to their wellbeing.
- PEF has been used well to teach small groups of children about positive relationships and to build resilience and confidence. Also, this funding has been used to deliver a programme in two classes to improve children's mental health and emotional wellbeing. Initial evidence from both of these interventions, indicates improvements in a few children's ability to self-regulate, leading to their improved engagement in class.
- A few children consider that the school is teaching them to lead a healthy lifestyle. They understand the importance of being active and children are active in lunch and after school clubs, for example dance and netball. Staff are not yet tracking and monitoring children's participation in these clubs in order to identify who takes part in an activity.
- Senior leaders require to review their roles and responsibilities in relation to the fulfilment of their statutory duties to improve outcomes for children and young people. For example, developing consistent approaches to recording relevant information in chronologies and preparing child's plans in line with best practice and local and national guidelines.
- Exclusions from the school are low and demonstrates the school's commitment to inclusion. The school has support plans in place for children with barriers to their learning. However, these plans should be reviewed to ensure that SMART targets are included and clear timescales are set to review progress. Currently, these plans are not resulting in consistently positive outcomes for children who require additional support with their learning.
- Whilst the majority of children consider that they are supported to achieve well in their learning, this is variable from class to class. Behaviour issues are often a barrier to learning for individual children and at times for a whole class. As a result of these issues, an 'Improving Relationships

and Promoting Positive Behaviour' policy was created in collaboration with staff and the parent council. This now needs to be shared with the wider parent forum and continue to be developed with children and staff in order to improve behaviour across the school.

- The school should continually review times when staff extract specific children/groups from classes and consider whether this is an appropriate action to support the needs of these children. The school should also consider, as a matter of urgency, the further development of nurturing approaches in order to support children displaying challenging behaviour in class.
- Senior leaders now need to develop an understanding of equality and diversity with all children and their families. As the curriculum is developed, teachers need to ensure there are progressive opportunities for children to learn about equality and diversity in 21st Century Scotland and in the wider global context.

### 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

- From data provided by the school, the overall attainment in literacy and numeracy is satisfactory. We have discussed with senior leaders the need to improve further the reliability of data through developing robust moderation approaches. This will support improvements in teacher judgement and understanding of achievement of Curriculum for Excellence levels.
- Most children at all stages achieve the appropriate Curriculum for Excellence levels in numeracy. Most children achieve the appropriate levels in reading and writing and almost all in listening and talking at early and first levels. At second level, the majority of children achieve the appropriate level in reading and writing and most in talking and listening.
- The school's predictions for this session show that at early level, most children are expected to achieve appropriate levels in reading and listening and talking and the majority in writing and numeracy. At first level, most children are expected to achieve the appropriate level in reading, writing and numeracy with all expected to achieve in listening and talking. At second level, the majority of children are expected to achieve the appropriate levels in reading, writing and numeracy and almost all in listening and talking. With the exception of listening and talking, these predicted figures at second level, in particular the numeracy prediction are lower than previous attainment performance would suggest. We discussed with senior leaders the need to closely monitor and discuss these predicted figures with staff to ensure a shared understanding of achievement of a level standards.

#### Attainment in literacy

- Overall children are making satisfactory progress in literacy and English.

#### Listening and talking

- Across the school, the majority of children are articulate and speak with confidence. They listen well and respond appropriately to each other, including when working cooperatively in small groups and to adults. At the early level, the majority of children are beginning to listen and respond to others appropriately and to share their ideas with the other children in their class. At the first level, the majority of children take turns in group discussions, making appropriate contributions. They identify the main idea from spoken and written texts and share their ideas with others. At the second level, the majority of children engage respectfully with others. They build on the ideas of others by asking and answering questions, clarifying points and supporting others opinions or ideas. They now need a range of opportunities to develop their skills in presenting to larger audiences.

#### Reading

- Across the school, children read for enjoyment. Most children are making good progress in developing their reading skills. At the early level, the majority of children identify common

words and use their knowledge of sounds and letters to read words. Staff should now consider the pace of learning to ensure children are appropriately challenged and making progress in reading. This will enable them to read aloud with confidence and fluency. At the first level, the majority of children are reading fluently and have strategies to decode unknown words. They explain their preferences for particular texts and authors. They can answer literal questions but are not yet confident in answering inferential questions. At the second level, most children read aloud with fluency and expression using appropriate pace and tone. They give a personal response to a text with appropriate justification. Across the school children require more opportunities to develop their reading skills through suitably challenging texts.

## **Writing**

- At the early level, the majority of children form lowercase letters legibly and know the sounds of lowercase and some uppercase letters. They are attempting to use capital letters and a full stop in at least one sentence. At the first level, the majority of children spell most commonly used words correctly. They plan and organise ideas and information using an appropriate format, including letters and newspaper reports. They should now focus on writing extended pieces of writing using appropriate punctuation. At the second level the majority of children create texts for a range of purposes and audiences selecting appropriate genre and style. They explain how to influence the reader for a specific purpose through the use of vocabulary and language, for example writing letters asking for donations and completing job applications. Children are not always clear on how to improve their progress in writing.

## **Numeracy and mathematics**

- Overall, attainment in numeracy and mathematics is satisfactory.
- The majority of children are making satisfactory progress in their learning in numeracy and mathematics. The school has correctly identified numeracy and mathematics as an improvement priority. The introduction of a maths recovery programme with support from the local authority, is building staff capacity to develop appropriate skills when teaching numeracy and mathematics. To raise attainment further, children need to improve their progress in applying their knowledge in unfamiliar contexts and real life problems where appropriate.

## **Number, money and measure**

- At early level, most children identify the number before, the number after and missing numbers in a sequence within 20. They are developing their understanding of addition and subtraction with the support of practical materials. Children's skills in applying mental agility number skills to calculate the total spent in a shopping situation and be able to calculate change are less well-developed. Most children can record times using am or pm and can identify 24 hour notation. They are less confident when estimating heights and lengths and using their knowledge of relationships between units of measure to make simple conversions. Overall, the majority of children at second level can round whole numbers to the nearest thousand and ten thousand. They require more practice in tackling multi-step and word based problems, especially examples involving money. At all levels children would benefit from focussing upon the importance of estimation prior to calculation.

## **Shape, position and movement**

- At early level, most children recognise, describe and sort common 2D shapes and 3D objects according to various criteria, for example, straight, round or curved. At first level, most children name, identify and classify a range of simple 2D shapes and 3D objects and recognises these shapes in different orientations and sizes. The majority of children working at second level describes 3D objects and 2D shapes using specific vocabulary including regular, irregular, radius and diameter. A further focus on the importance of accuracy when drawing and measuring angles is required.

## Information handling

- At early level, most children contribute to concrete or pictorial displays, such as pictograms, where one object or drawing represents one data value. They sort items according to different criteria. Children working at first and second level use an increasing range of presentation methods, including Venn diagrams, bar graphs and pie charts. They need to develop further their skills in collecting, analysing and interpreting data from a range of real life contexts. Children also need to develop their skills in linking information handling skills with other curriculum areas or when working on whole school projects.

## Attainment over time

- Overall, there is no consistency in improvement over time in literacy or numeracy. Staff recognise the need to develop approaches to moderation and sharing of standards to help support improvements in attainment at all levels. Staff are at the early stages of developing the use of Scottish Standardised Assessments and the National Benchmarks to support professional judgement. Senior leaders recognises the need to continue to support and engage all staff in using these materials to improve attainment.
- Senior leaders track children's attainment and uses this information well to discuss progress and identify targeted interventions for children as appropriate. The recently revised approaches to teaching numeracy are showing early signs of impacting upon children's progress. Staff report improved confidence when delivering mathematics and numeracy lessons. Children are benefitting from more opportunities to discuss strategies and when appropriate, encouraged to use concrete materials when solving a variety of problems.

## Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Children are achieving in a few aspects of developing leadership, though for example the MacMillan Coffee morning where P4/5 children are developing well their organisational and team working skills. Children in P5 are involved in the John Muir Award are developing well their awareness of environmental issues and being encouraged to become responsible citizens. There is scope for senior leaders to enable children to achieve further and gain accreditation from involvement in this initiative.
- Wider achievements are celebrated in a variety of ways including at assemblies, using social media, classroom displays and corridor noticeboards. After school clubs such as, coding for beginners, science, dance, Lego and netball are supporting well children's achievements in aspects of problem solving, numeracy and team work. Senior leaders are now better placed to track and monitor participation levels, identify skills obtained during these achievement activities and link these to the curriculum where appropriate.

## Equity for all learners

- The Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) has been used to develop interventions on literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing For example in numeracy, the 'Magic Numbers' initiative was designed to support basic number skills for particular children working at early level. Although, it is too early to measure the impact of this initiative, senior leaders now need to develop clear strategies to evaluate the impact of chosen interventions and how these are contributing to closing the attainment gap.

## Choice of QI: 2.7 Partnerships

- The development and promotion of partnerships
- Collaborative learning and improvement
- Impact on learners

- Senior leaders have worked very well with staff to build positive partnerships. Partners report very positively on their relationship with staff and children at Macmerry Primary School. They feel that their contribution is valued and most believe that effective arrangements are in place to evaluate the impact of their partnership working. Almost partners believe that partnership working with the school works well. There is scope to develop further opportunities to network, share practice and participate in joint training and development with the school.
- The school is developing well the range of partners who support the school. A wide variety of partners are working with children to improve and enhance learning experiences. For example, the community police officer has delivered internet safety training to all P4 to P7 children reducing the number of reported cyberbullying incidents in the community. Also, the Active Schools co-ordinator working in partnership with P7 Sports Leaders is developing opportunities for children to organise and lead on sporting activities in the school.
- The school has a positive and supportive relationship with the parent council-. They have been consulted appropriately on the creation of the school's vision, values and aims and also been invited to SIP meetings. They have been actively involved in discussions around traffic management and parking issues at the school resulting in improved safety for children travelling to and from school. The acting headteacher and parent council acknowledge that further development is required to ensure that the parent council represents the views of the wider parent body and is more representative of the community.
- A strong partnership with the community minister is strengthening links with the local community through a number of initiatives. These include children from P6 and P7 organising and delivering a music concert in the community and children from P1 to P3 participating in a Nativity performance. These partnership activities are providing children with the opportunity to develop their leadership and performing skills in settings outwith school.
- Overall, parental responses in the pre-inspection questionnaire are positive. Parents are made to feel very welcome at Macmerry Primary School and senior leaders employ a variety of approaches to encourage parental engagement. These include; the use of online surveys, questionnaires, regular newsletters and social media. Most parents report that their child is making good progress at school.
- The school is developing new and helpful approaches to encourage parents to become more involved in their child's learning. This includes consulting with parents on homework, providing information on school activities and the introduction of digital profiling to inform parents of children's attainment and achievement. A few parents expressed concerns regarding the information they receive about their child's progress. The schools needs to take on board the helpful suggestions provided by parents, including reviewing the timings of parents evenings and staff providing more advice on how parents can support learning at home.

## 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.