

# Summarised inspection findings

**Collace Primary School**

Perth and Kinross Council

23 January 2024

## Key contextual information

Collace Primary School is a small, rural school situated in the hamlet of Collace, near Coupar Angus, Perthshire. The school serves Collace, Kinrossie and the surrounding rural area. At the time of inspection, the school roll was 25 pupils across P1 to P7. Children are taught in two multi-stage composite classes, P1 to P3, and P4 to P7. Collace Primary School, along with Balbeggie Primary School and Nursery Class, is part of a long-standing shared headship arrangement.

The current headteacher took up permanent post in September 2023.

The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) indicates that most children who attend the school live in decile four. A few children live in deciles two and three.

### 1.3 Leadership of change

good

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 headteacher provides astute and very well-judged leadership to the Collace school community. In a very short space of time, she has built strong, respectful relationships with staff, parents and children. The experienced headteacher demonstrates highly-effective leadership skills which is enabling her to lead change and improvement across the school. The principal teacher supports the headteacher well. The local authority has introduced a new senior team approach, and the principal teacher is now deployed in Collace Primary School as well as in Balbeggie Primary School. The principal teacher now carries out leadership responsibilities and a teaching role in both schools. Staff and parents welcome this change. As a senior leadership team, the headteacher and principal teacher are bringing confidence to the school community. They are planning for the future development of Collace Primary School, building on the many important strengths that already exist.
- Since taking up post, the headteacher is bringing a fresh perspective to the established vision, values and aims of the school. Senior leaders have plans to collaborate closely with staff, parents and children to ensure the values are meaningful in the daily life of the school. The school vision is for everyone in Collace Primary School to be 'responsible for nurturing the learning of all'. Children are not always sure what this means for them. Children have a fairly good understanding of their school values, 'respectful, ready and safe'. They refer to the values as their school rules. The headteacher plans to revisit the vision and values, to make sure these are still relevant to the current needs and aspirations of the school community.
- A period of leadership instability, and other staffing changes, have had an impact on the pace of improvement across the school. The headteacher has identified quickly a few key priorities to be taken forward this year. Through self-evaluation, the headteacher and staff have set measurable targets to improve the consistency in the quality of learning, teaching and assessment; and to raise attainment in literacy.

- Staff work very well together as a close team. They have ensured that children have remained happy, secure and enabled to learn, despite the changes in senior leadership over a brief period. Under the direction of the new headteacher, staff are leading well on individual aspects of school improvement, such as learning through play and a national programme for improving children's writing. Staff are positive about the future direction of the school and feel empowered to carry out small tests of change and new ideas within their classes.
- All staff have a clear understanding of the socio-economic needs of the school community. They have an informed understanding of the challenges faced by families, through their use of self-evaluation and discussions with children and families. This includes the continued impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on family health and wellbeing, and the cost-of-living crisis.
- The headteacher and principal teacher are working closely with all staff to build on the team's positive attitudes to professional learning. Teachers recognise and articulate well the benefits of professional learning as a team and as part of their local cluster. For example, teachers are collaborating with colleagues across the cluster to share standards in assessing children's listening and talking skills. A next step is for teachers to become more confident in assessing how effectively they are addressing barriers to learning and identified gaps in children's attainment. Teachers demonstrate increasing confidence in interrogating data to assess children's progress through Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels, in particular for literacy and numeracy. They will benefit from the continued guidance of senior leaders to monitor children's pace of progress across all curriculum areas.
- Children benefit from the very well-planned opportunities to work together, in and out of class. All children have opportunities to take on leadership roles. For example, they act as helpers in class, and participate in committees and lunchtime clubs. Older children act as supportive buddies to younger children. The majority of children can identify aspects of their influence on school life. For example, the pupil council recently surveyed their classmates on which clubs they would like to see. In response to the results they gathered, children were instrumental in starting the popular drama club, and have plans to introduce additional clubs across the year. Children are very enthusiastic about their House system. They like that staff spot when they are doing well and recognise and reward them for their successes. They enjoy being selected to spend time with the headteacher, to share their learning and achievements with her.
- The school benefits significantly from the active Parent Council, known as the Collace School Association, who work tirelessly to raise funds. They help to maintain and encourage the strong community links and provide enriching activities for children, such as trips to the theatre and the science centre in Dundee. Until very recently, parents have had limited opportunity to influence and support the school's improvement agenda. Parents appreciate the enthusiastic and thorough approach of the new headteacher. They look forward to being more included in making decisions about the life of the school, for example, in how Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) and other funding is used. Parents are optimistic about the direction of the school under the leadership of the new headteacher. A few parents feel that communication and consultation between school leaders and families has improved since the headteacher was appointed.

## 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 staff team create a friendly and inclusive ethos across the school. Relationships between staff and children are positive and supportive. Learning environments are well-organised and purposeful and as a result, children participate well in lessons. Children learn well together and offer support and help to each other in class and across the school, as buddies and when reading in pairs.
- Children use digital technology confidently to support their learning. This is helping them to extend their research skills, consolidate learning and to explore coding. Older children share their skills with others as digital leaders. A few children use assistive technology independently to help them in their writing. The school is currently working towards achieving the national Digital Schools Award.
- Teachers and all staff have a clear focus on making learning interesting and relevant. Children value the support they get from teachers and the wider school staff. Classroom displays show and celebrate children's work well. Children self-assess their own work and give feedback to their peers, for example on the quality of their writing. Children would benefit from support to revisit strategies to help them find solutions and become more independent in their own learning. Teachers should share practice to maximise time for learning, to promote further children's engagement, participation and leadership of their own learning.
- Staff ensure that younger children benefit from high-quality learning that is based firmly on play pedagogy. They take good account of the principles of play within national guidance. This helps to ensure that planned learning is motivating and meaningful and provides younger children with daily opportunities to lead their own learning. The activities that staff provide provoke and encourage children's curiosity and creativity very well.
- In lessons, teachers provide clear instructions and almost all children know the purpose of their learning. Teachers use questioning effectively to engage children and to check for understanding. A few children are able to talk about the skills they are developing and how this helps them. Senior leaders and teachers should continue to develop children's understanding of skills more consistently across learning. For example, children would benefit from teachers highlighting the skills they are developing in lessons and activities. This will help children develop a greater awareness and better understanding of the relevance of their learning of skills for learning, life and work.
- Teachers plan tasks and activities well for the multi-stage groups of children. Overall, they differentiate lessons well to meet the varying needs and abilities of all. This helps almost all children to remain engaged and focused on their learning. Children who need additional help

with their learning are supported well in class and through sensitive, targeted interventions from pupil support assistants. A few children would welcome, and benefit from, increased opportunities for challenge in their learning.

- Teachers provide written and verbal feedback to children about their learning. Older children have protected time each week to reflect on their learning and to record this in an online learning app. They signpost the activities they have enjoyed taking part in and include some examples of work that they are proud of. Teachers should consider how best to re-introduce ways to set short-term personalised targets for each child, linked to the feedback they receive on their work. They should consider using the dedicated time for reflection in a more formalised way, to help children understand more clearly how they are progressing, the skills and knowledge they are developing, and what they need to do to improve.
- The school is set in spacious and attractive grounds that provide ample space for children to play and learn outdoors. Children enjoy taking their learning outdoors and take a very active part in gardening activities and learning about sustainability, particularly in preparation for the school's annual plant sale. The headteacher has plans in place, going forward, to further enhance outdoor learning as a key driver of the school's curriculum.
- Teachers plan learning across all curriculum areas to meet children's needs. Within interdisciplinary learning topics, children collaborate well with their teachers to plan and shape their learning, using 'what I know', 'what I want to know' and 'how will we learn' frameworks. Teachers plan for learning over the long and short term, ensuring that children experience a broad and balanced curriculum. Staff continue to review planning processes with a focus on introducing new education authority resources. Teachers should seek further opportunities to include children more fully in the planning of their own learning.
- Teachers use a variety of assessments for literacy and numeracy to provide baseline data and to demonstrate children's progress. The headteacher has introduced an assessment calendar that outlines clearly when key assessments and tests will take place across the school year. This can help staff to ensure that assessment is an integral, on-going part of planned learning that informs their teaching. Teachers are re-engaging with moderation activities with colleagues in other schools following the pandemic. As planned, teachers would benefit from more opportunities to work alongside colleagues in other schools to share practice in planning for assessment and more explicitly linking children's progress to national Benchmarks. This will help to support teachers' confidence and accuracy further in making judgements about children's achievement of CfE levels.
- The headteacher uses the education authority's digital system to check and monitor how well children are learning in literacy and numeracy. Since her appointment, the headteacher has introduced focused meetings with staff to check regularly on all children's attainment. These approaches are impacting positively on teachers' confidence to discuss children and their progress in planned learning, particularly in literacy and numeracy. In developing this monitoring process further, senior leaders and teachers should consider further the connections between planned learning and assessment. This will ensure children are better supported to build on prior learning and identify their next steps. At key milestones, teachers can demonstrate children's progress and attainment in literacy and numeracy. Senior leaders and teachers should continue with their plans to use local authority materials to assess and track children's progress in all curriculum areas.

## 2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- Staff provide children with a wide range of learning experiences across all curricular areas. This supports children to receive their entitlement to a full, broad and balanced curriculum. Staff use the education authority's progression pathways well to plan for literacy and numeracy. Staff have plans in place to now adopt similar progression pathways across all curriculum areas.
- Children, staff and parents are very proud of the key role that Collace Primary School plays in the local community. Children are involved fully in the popular, very well attended events, such as the Macmillan Coffee Morning, annual plant sale and pop-up charity shop. These provide meaningful and highly relevant contexts for learning. Parents, grandparents and members of the community volunteer their time to enrich children's experiences. For example, through the knitting club, children learn traditional craft skills to produce blankets for older people in a care home. It is timely for staff to now revisit and refresh the school's curriculum rationale along with children, parents and partners, to ensure that such valuable learning contexts are captured and planned for as key aspects of children's learning.
- Staff provide all children with opportunities to take part in two hours of high-quality physical education (PE) per week. Due to the limitations of the school building, children and staff travel by bus to a nearby village hall for PE lessons. These opportunities encourage children to work cooperatively in teams and increase their physical fitness.
- Across the school, children learn French and Spanish in line with the Scottish Government's '1+2' language policy. All children also learn basic British Sign Language. Teachers reinforce French, Spanish vocabulary and signing in the day-to-day life of the school. Children in the upper stages have benefited from the input of Spanish native speakers. They can discuss what they like about language learning and can use short words and phrases well.
- The school has effective approaches in place to support all children at times of transition. Children who require extended transitions are provided with bespoke pathways designed to best meet their individual needs. This helps them to settle more quickly.



## 2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- Parents feel that the school is a very welcoming environment, and that staff are approachable. Parents are pleased that the new headteacher is reviewing the ways that the school communicates with families, including the use of an online app. Teachers provide a termly overview of planned learning on the digital app. Homework tasks are posted on the app, and older children use it each week to share aspects of their learning with their families. Overall, most parents would like more information and feedback from teachers to help them to talk to their child about their learning at home. A few parents would like more information about the ways that their child's learning is assessed. As staff develop further their approaches to assessment, they should ensure that parents have information about how children's learning is monitored and how well they are progressing. For a minority of parents, their children started school during the pandemic, when parents had little or no access to the school building. Staff could consider offering more family learning opportunities for parents who wish to be more involved in school life and in their child's learning.
- Parents organise a range of fundraising activities through the Collace School Association, to enhance children's experiences throughout the year. Of note is the annual pop-up charity shop that parents run in nearby Coupar Angus. Parents and children give up part of their school holidays to collect donated items and to manage the shop. This raises significant funds for the school. Children's experiences are enriched through operating the shop and this is providing real life opportunities for them to learn new skills about commerce and the world of work.

## 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. An area for development has been agreed with the school and the education authority.



### 3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

good

This indicator focuses on the impact of the school's approach to wellbeing which underpins children and young people's ability to achieve success. It highlights the need for policies and practices to be well grounded in current legislation and a shared understanding of the value of every individual. A clear focus on ensuring wellbeing entitlements and protected characteristics supports all learners to maximise their successes and achievements. The themes are:

- wellbeing
- fulfilment of statutory duties
- inclusion and equality

- Staff provide a safe and welcoming environment where children feel happy, valued and included. Children are polite, kind, well mannered and supportive of each other. They are becoming aware of the wellbeing indicators and what each one means for them. They use the indicators to assess their own health and wellbeing at several points across the school year. They talk confidently about what it means to be included, active and healthy. They are less sure about describing feeling safe in different contexts, or what nurture means to them. Staff should continue to embed the language and relevance of the wellbeing indicators with children, including in their lives beyond school.
- The headteacher has very recently introduced a new policy for ensuring positive relationships, restorative approaches to dealing with discipline and anti-bullying strategies. This appropriate policy promotes a common approach to wellbeing and classroom management, based on nurture principles. Staff should continue with plans to discuss the new policy together. Going forward, the staff team should continue to increase their awareness of nurture and trauma-informed practices to best meet the needs of all children.
- Children know they have adults they can talk to if they have concerns or if they need help. They recognise how they support each other in classes, for example, through the buddy system and paired-reading scheme. Children would benefit from more support to develop resilience in out-of-class situations. For example, they would benefit from developing the skills they need to resolve their own issues and minor disagreements in the playground.
- Children experience a broad and well-planned health and wellbeing curriculum. As a result, they are developing good skills and understanding in mental health, positive relationships, the importance of physical exercise and road safety. Staff support children well to gain an understanding of how wellbeing affects their emotions through a whole school programme designed to improve mental health. It is now timely for staff to track children's progress in all aspects of health and wellbeing. This will ensure the range of programmes enable children to build skills in all areas.
- Children benefit from a positive lunchtime experience. Catering staff know children's preferences and encourage children to eat well while they engage in a positive social experience. A few parents would like to see children being encouraged to drink more water and to keep well hydrated during the school day.
- Staff have a strong understanding of their responsibilities and statutory duties related to wellbeing, equality and inclusion. Senior leaders and staff have well-developed and up-to-date approaches to child protection, safeguarding and meeting the additional support needs of learners.

- The headteacher has quickly gained an accurate overview of the range of children's needs across the school, supported by recently appointed visiting support for learning staff. Together, they are reviewing the thresholds staff use for identifying the need for additional support. This includes reviewing the balance of universal and targeted support within classes, and introducing a staged approach to intervention. A few children who require additional support for learning have an individual child's plan. Interventions and strategies to support children are planned and recorded in these individualised plans. Parents are involved fully in review meetings and in the child-planning processes. Children share their views and take an active part in the review process. Staff should ensure that short-term targets within the individualised plans are more measurable, achievable, realistic and time bound. This will help them to measure children's progress more clearly. This will also support children's and parents' understanding of the targets and provide clearer information for teachers on the precise steps to take and strategies to use.
- Staff and children have achieved the silver award in the Rights Respecting Schools scheme, and older children in particular are aware of, and talk about, their rights. They can articulate and justify situations that they feel are fair or unfair. Overall, most children feel included and engaged in the life of the school. Staff give them regular opportunities to have their voices heard. This includes involvement in the pupil council, eco committee, library committee and school improvement assemblies. The headteacher and staff have identified the need to provide more opportunities for children to learn about diversity in society.
- Overall, children's attendance at Collace Primary School is in line with national averages, however, staff are vigilant in this area. The headteacher and staff track children's attendance robustly and liaise with families as and when required. There have been no exclusions in recent years.

## 3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

good

This indicator focuses on the school's success in achieving the best possible outcomes for all learners. Success is measured in attainment across all areas of the curriculum and through the school's ability to demonstrate learners' achievements in relation to skills and attributes. Continuous improvement or sustained high standards over time is a key feature of this indicator. The themes are:

- attainment in literacy and numeracy
- attainment over time
- overall quality of learners' achievement
- equity for all learners

### Attainment in literacy and numeracy

- Children's attainment and progress is expressed in 'overall' statements, rather than for specific year groups or CfE levels. This is because of the very small numbers of children at each stage.
- Overall, children's attainment in literacy is good, and in numeracy it is very good. Across the school, most children are on track to achieve national expected levels of attainment, with a few children predicted to exceed national expectations. Almost all children with additional support needs are making good progress towards their individual targets in learning. Children for whom English is an additional language make very good progress across their learning.

### Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, children's progress and attainment in literacy and English is good.

### Listening and talking

- Overall, most children are making good progress in listening and talking. Younger children enjoy listening to stories. Most listen well for instructions, for example in following the class routines. Most listen and chat to each other with interest, as they play and learn in small groups. Most older children are articulate and can express their ideas and opinions confidently. They take turns appropriately and listen well during class discussions, although they can tend to talk over and interrupt each other when working in groups. By P7, almost all children describe the features required when presenting a prepared talk to their peers. They can also identify what makes a respectful audience. Children should continue to be supported to transfer this understanding when working in group situations. Older children would benefit from taking part in class debates on topical issues to put their persuasive writing skills into practice.

### Reading

- Across the school, most children have a very good understanding of core reading skills, and almost all can apply these successfully in new contexts. Younger children are developing their knowledge of initial sounds well. A few children can read some common words. As they progress through the early stages, most children apply their knowledge of words well to decode new and unfamiliar words. At the upper stages, most children read aloud fluently, a few with great expression. Across the school, most children enjoy talking about their favourite books and authors and give explanations to justify their choice. They write book reviews and recommend texts to their friends. At the upper stages, most children can identify a few techniques that writers and poets use to engage readers, for example, simile, metaphor and alliteration. All children benefit from the well-established paired reading sessions that take place each week.
- Children can choose from a wide variety of books in the school and class libraries. They can also choose from a mobile library van that visits the school each month. Children have

responsibility for organising the school library, arranging books in alphabetical order and keeping it tidy.

## **Writing**

- Staff are implementing new approaches to teaching writing. There are early signs that this is leading to improvement in the quality of children's written work. Children's progress in writing is good, overall. Almost all younger children are learning to form letters correctly. A few attempt to write independently as they engage in imaginative play. Most can write simple sentences, using appropriate punctuation. They are learning to take notes to help them to write well-ordered reports. As children move through the stages of the upper school, they write for different purposes, often linked to their topic work. Most children identify features of imaginative, functional and personal writing. They use features of writing, such as similes and metaphors, well to make their writing interesting. Most older children enjoy writing stories. High achieving children would benefit from more opportunities to write extended pieces, and from learning to practice the skills of drafting, editing and redrafting their own work. They should continue to be encouraged to apply their writing skills consistently well across their learning, outwith writing lessons. A few children are benefitting from targeted support as part of a national programme to improve children's writing skills. These targeted approaches are helping this small group of children to use correct punctuation more consistently in their writing.

## **Numeracy and mathematics**

- Overall, children's progress and attainment in numeracy and mathematics is very good.

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

- Most younger children can order numbers 0 to 20 correctly. As they move through the stages of the school, most children are developing their knowledge of place value well. Teachers plan motivating games and activities to improve older children's speed and agility in mental calculations, particularly recall of multiplication and division facts.
- Across the school, most children demonstrate an appropriate understanding of time and money for their age and stage. A next step is for older children to experience learning about money in real-life contexts, such as credit and debit cards, loans, and working within a budget. Most older children have a sound knowledge of fractions, decimals and percentages and use this knowledge well to solve problems. Most children are confident in estimating the lengths of familiar objects. Younger children use arbitrary units well to measure objects within the classroom.

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

- Across the school, almost all children have a sound understanding of symmetry, two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects, appropriate to their age and stage. Most older children can apply their knowledge about compass points and direction well when creating maps as part of their topic work. Children across the school use programmable gadgets and their knowledge of coding very well to enhance their knowledge of direction and patterns.

### **Information handling**

- Across the school, almost all children sort and display data in a few different ways. By P7, they know how to collect information using tally marks and can display their data in a range of graphs and charts. They apply their knowledge well by carrying out their own surveys as part of their committees and pupil council work.

### **Attainment over time**

- Overall, children's attainment over the past few years has remained steady, despite the impact of the pandemic, along with the changes in leadership. The school's evidence shows that most

children are achieving expected national levels in literacy and numeracy over time. The headteacher and staff have identified the need to continue to raise attainment in writing and listening and talking and are taking the right steps to achieve this. The headteacher has identified that there is scope for further improvement in attainment. She has appropriate plans in place to achieve this, including by teachers sharing practice and continuing to encourage children's own expectations of what they can achieve.

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

- Children are proud of their school and their achievements, in and outwith school. This includes their awards for celebrating children's rights and for sustainability. They know they are valued as part of their school and wider village community. Children of all ages enthusiastically share their own achievements from home regularly. Teachers use different methods to share children's successes with parents, for example, on wall displays, in newsletters and digital platforms. Staff are aware of all children's achievements and take steps to ensure all children have opportunities to enjoy success. Staff should now support children to have a greater understanding of the skills they are developing as part of their personal and collective achievements.

### **Equity for all learners**

- The headteacher and staff have a secure understanding of the challenges faced by families. The headteacher has introduced helpful approaches to track and monitor the attainment and achievement of all children, including those who have barriers to learning or experience disadvantage. The headteacher has prioritised the use of PEF to address any gaps in children's learning, including gaps that may arise through disadvantage. She ensures that all children have equity in their school experiences. The headteacher has appropriate plans in place to ensure that parents and children are consulted on PEF spending. Families, through the Collace School Association, support the school's work to ensure equity very well, by funding different trips and treats to ensure no child is at risk of missing out.

## 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.