

# Summarised inspection findings

**Arnage School**

Aberdeenshire Council

22 May 2018

### 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 has worked with stakeholders to develop a clear aspirational vision statement for the school which articulates with the four capacities at the heart of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE). This is displayed in the school environment and is linked to achievement awards which children can gain. It is also linked to activities and working groups which involve all the children in the school. One of these working groups is taking forward work in relation to gaining a 'Rights Respecting Schools' award. This presents a good opportunity to involve children and other stakeholders in developing a fuller statement of school values in relation to children's rights. This can underpin the work of the school and ongoing curriculum development.
- The headteacher has earned the trust and respect of the staff and wider school community. She demonstrates a reflective and systematic approach to change and school improvements are well planned and increasingly evidence based. Stakeholders are increasingly involved in evaluating the progress of school improvements. In evaluating improvement priorities staff should focus more on the impact on outcomes for learners.
- Staff know their children and families well and the school serves as an active community hub. Parents and members of the local community are involved in the school in a variety of ways to support children's learning. The leadership of the headteacher is increasing. Staff use the unique context of the school to enhance learning, which is helping to develop a more contextualised approach to curriculum planning.
- Professional learning and development of staff is well managed by the headteacher. She provides leadership opportunities for staff and they have led on school improvements, for example, in 1+2, formative assessment and eco work. Staff show commitment to shared educational values and professional standards. Teachers are proactive in planning their professional learning, which is linked to priorities in the school improvement plan (SIP). Planned use is made of General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) Professional Standards to support self-evaluation and support further professional learning and development. The headteacher observes teaching and gives written and verbal feedback to teachers. Feedback from observations of teaching could be more detailed and include clear actions for improvement to be taken forward. These should be evaluated through further observation and professional dialogue. The headteacher should also continue with plans to enhance opportunities for focused professional dialogue to support collegiate professional learning for staff.
- Pupil voice is being developed effectively in the school. All children in the school are members of groups which are working on aspects of school improvement. Children agree that school

groups, including the pupil council, are making improvements in the school. Children feel a sense of pride in their school and have a sense that they can make a positive difference. They are involved in reviewing and discussing their learning regularly.

- Staff are currently developing a more robust evidence base to inform their self-evaluation and identify priorities for the SIP. Increasing use is being made of 'How Good is Our School?' 4<sup>th</sup> Edition (HGIOS?4) to inform self-evaluation and new arrangements have been put in place to track children's progress in learning more effectively. Work is also under way with parents to inform them more clearly and regularly about how their child is progressing in learning. The introduction of electronic, interactive learning journals to support improved communication about learning has been welcomed by parents.
- We spoke to visiting professionals and other partners during the inspection and they felt their relationship with the school was supportive and that their contribution was valued. As yet these partners have a limited involvement in evaluating the impact of the service they provide on the work of the school. The school is actively supported by a few local employers who are helping to develop additional contexts for learning. A number of parents are involved in running groups and supporting aspect of the curriculum, for example in French and technology, and this is also helping children to develop their understanding of different work roles. The school is at an early stage of engagement with the Career Education Standard (CES) and staff are considering the use of 'I can' statements in relation to the 'Skills for life' framework they have developed. The headteacher is aware of the need to engage further with partners and parents to continue to develop this important area of learning for children.

## 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

- The ethos of the school is welcoming and friendly. Teachers and support staff, including those who visit the school, have positive relationships with children. Children are patient, caring and supportive of each other in class and in the outdoor play areas. They behave very well and they are polite and friendly to each other and to adults. The school is currently working towards recognition as a Rights Respecting School. The headteacher is working hard to ensure that valuing and ensuring children's rights increasingly underpins all aspects of the life and work of the school.
- Across the school, children are encouraged, through involvement in committees and clubs, to gain important life skills. They enjoy these opportunities and most children can link the skills they gain from teamwork, health week and citizenship activities to other areas of their learning. Most children are growing in confidence, though this is an area where they could be supported to develop further. For example, children could be more self-assured in talking about their strengths and abilities as a learner. One area where they particularly showed their enthusiasm for learning was during music lessons with the visiting music teacher.
- Overall, children are keen to engage in the learning activities that are planned for them. Children who require additional support with their learning are known to all staff and they receive effective pastoral care. In the best of lessons, for example, children had opportunities to work in groups and to share their ideas and opinions. They were clearly accustomed to working in this way and could articulate clearly what they had learned. However, learning experiences are not of a consistently high quality for all children across the school. Too often the youngest children were observed to be passive learners. They had insufficient opportunities to learn effectively through play. We have discussed with the headteacher the need for teachers' plans to include play-based pedagogy in the early stages class.
- Learning intentions and success criteria are shared with children in most lessons. However, there is too much variation in the ways teachers provide feedback to learners. Teachers need to develop children's skill in talking about their own progress and knowing what they need to do to improve.
- When lessons were well-paced and supported by activities that were motivating and planned to meet the needs of individuals and groups, children remained on task and enjoyed their learning. There were examples of effective use of differentiation, for example, in a literacy lesson where children worked very well in mixed age groups to design a persuasive advert. Most lessons that were observed were well organised and took appropriate account of the individual needs of children. This was particularly evident in the upper stages class.

- In the majority of lessons teachers' gave clear explanations. However, we have asked teachers to consider the amount of time children sit listening to instructions and responding to closed questions and questions that do not extend thinking. At times, learning is overly adult-directed and children need more choice and ownership of their learning. There is a need to promote deeper thinking and creativity in some lessons. We have suggested that teachers consider reading some research on thinking skills and making learning visible. There is scope to improve teaching approaches across the school through a stronger focus on a child-centred pedagogy, particularly for the very youngest children.
- During the inspection children made limited use of digital technology to support or enhance their learning during lessons. However, teachers do make some effective use of digital technologies to support their teaching. We have suggested that teachers have a clear rationale for accessing online digital content as a teaching aid.
- Children took part in the daily mile but beyond that there was no opportunity to observe children learning outdoors, due to bad weather conditions. Teachers are developing contexts for learning outdoors and should continue this work, along with stakeholders, to further develop stimulating contexts for children's learning across all curriculum areas.
- The headteacher has promoted the analysis of assessment information as a tool to inform teaching and learning. As a result teachers have recently focussed more on using data to help them plan learning. This will support planning to better meet the needs of all learners. They are using the recently developed electronic tracking system to build up trend data, which will be used to track children's progress in key areas of their learning over time. This is helping to ensure that the progress of all children in their learning, including those facing additional challenges, is monitored and appropriate action is taken when specific support is required.
- Moderation activities with the cluster schools are building teachers' confidence in recognising the achievement of a curriculum level. The headteacher and teachers are aware of the need to make better use of a wider range of assessment information, including teachers' professional judgement, to inform their curriculum plans and future learning activities.
- The school has identified that learning conversations with children are a source of important information when planning topics and themes, in giving children a say in what they want to learn. Through their input to their learning journals, children are recording aspects of their progress in learning. Parents spoken to during the inspection said that they find the learning journals informative. There is scope to involve children more in talking about their learning and assessing the extent of their knowledge and understanding. This will naturally support the development of a greater input from children to their learning journals.

## 2.2 Curriculum: Learning and development pathways

- A rationale for the curriculum has been developed around the school vision. The rationale was revised in 2016 in consultation with stakeholders. Although the rationale is clear there is scope for the curriculum to be more closely aligned to the unique context of the school. By working with children, parents and others the values for the school could helpfully be refreshed and then linked directly to the rationale for the curriculum alongside a refreshed vision and aims.
- The school has identified that there is more work to be done to bring the curriculum into line with national expectations. This includes reflecting on the effective use of the national benchmarks and developing learning pathways that adopt a skills-based approach.
- A recent focus on family learning seeks to involve parents more in helping to design and support aspects of the curriculum. The school has had some success in engaging parents in a variety of ways to enhance children's learning (see choice Q1 2.5 Family learning for more). The school is aware that it needs to revisit its approaches for inter-disciplinary learning (IDL) in light of the most recent national advice.
- Children have opportunities to attend after school clubs. Parents and staff contribute to activities and opportunities after the school day. A coding club is planned. Other opportunities to develop skills for learning, life and work include the gardening club, Rights Respecting School group, the Eco group and the charities group. As the school develops its curriculum pathways it will be important to extend links and strengthen existing links with local partners and businesses in the nearby community and beyond.
- Arrangements for children moving from early learning and childcare settings, including the playgroup which operates within the school building, are well established. Closer working with the playgroup throughout the year would allow for greater curriculum continuity and progression in children's learning across the 'early level'. Children moving to secondary school have a programme of induction and also opportunities to attend a residential trip with their peers from the cluster primary schools. These are helping children to build their confidence through supportive relationships with peers.
- Commendably the school supports tooth brushing but we ask that they look at ways of doing this that uses up less teaching time.

## 2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- Staff have developed a range of ways to engage, and communicate with, parents and carers to support children's progress in their learning. A home-school book is taken home daily to inform parents and carers and encourage them to comment or ask questions. Parents see teachers as very approachable and classroom visits are arranged on both an informal and formal basis. The use of electronic media is increasingly being developed to enhance communications and provide better information about children's learning. The recent introduction of an electronic learning journal has been well received by staff, children and parents and carers. This is an interactive resource which can help to develop a fuller picture of children's learning. As its use develops, children can increasingly take ownership of their journals and use them to support more effective dialogue about their learning with adults and other children.

## 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. At the time of the inspection, there were no identified areas for development.

### 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

- The school's core values, which include commitment to learning, respect for self, others and the environment and a sense of belonging and responsibility are clearly upheld by staff and children. Children are happy in school and feel they are looked after well. Teaching and support staff show caring interactions with children and know the children very well. Support staff, including janitorial, office and catering staff, take time to listen to children and engage with them empathetically, for example, during break times and lunchtime.
- Children spoken to by HM Inspectors during the inspection week spoke positively about their school. Children are able to describe the things they enjoy most about their school and what makes their school a happy place to attend. For example, they like playing outside, attending jogging club and taking part in the activities on offer during health week. Through a recent focus on adopting positive attitudes to learning, children are beginning to have greater confidence in themselves as learners. The school has a house system which is organised by the Pupil Council. This is helping children to develop important skills and confidence while developing their engagement in improving the school. A few children still lack confidence and need further targeted support to build self-esteem and resilience.
- Parents who were spoken to voiced their satisfaction with almost all aspects of the life and work of the school. A few wanted to have clearer guidance on how to help their children at home with learning skills, for example in mathematics. The school is aware of the need to work with parents in this regard and curriculum workshops are currently being planned for the very near future.
- The school staff comply with statutory duties. The headteacher has responsibility for maintaining the staged intervention processes and ensuring that children's targeted support plans are updated appropriately. Staff and children are very familiar with the wellbeing indicators and children are increasingly able to use these when discussing their rights and issues that might affect their wellbeing.
- The school provided information on how they identify children who may require additional help with their learning. The visiting support for learning teacher works with children to improve aspects of their knowledge and skills in literacy and numeracy. A few children also receive targeted support from pupil support assistants and have inputs from speech and language therapy professionals. The majority of support that is provided takes place in the child's classroom and sometimes children are withdrawn for support. We would agree with the school that it keeps the arrangements for extracting children for support on a one to one basis under review. This will help to ensure that children do not miss out on learning opportunities with their peers.

- Children have opportunities to set targets for their learning and these are reviewed with the support of the class teacher or primary school assistant (PSA). For example, they are aware of their literacy targets and they self-assess their progress. Teachers provide written feedback to children on their writing. Children then comment in their next piece of work how well they are progressing. Parents and carers have some involvement through their child's personal learning journals.
- Children are fully aware of the importance of keeping fit and healthy. They make sensible choices at lunch times and they eat well in social groups. They interact very well with each other during these social occasions where they receive respectful support from dining and support staff.
- The headteacher is aware of the need to make appropriate arrangements for religious observance, and to support children to celebrate diversity and respect different people and their beliefs and cultures. She has identified a few representatives of different faiths who can provide contexts and opportunities for children to widen their learning. We have asked her to continue to work with partners and stakeholders to develop learning opportunities around equality and diversity. Children can also play an active role in celebrating the values of the school and its wider community.

## 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
- equality for all learners

- The overall quality of attainment in literacy and numeracy is satisfactory. The majority of children are attaining appropriate CfE levels and a few are exceeding these. Most children make progress from their prior levels of attainment. During the inspection week HM Inspectors observed learning, sampled children's work and engaged with groups of learners. They looked closely at data and assessment information and discussed this in detail with teaching staff. The inspection team is confident that the data provided by the school accurately illustrates the progress made by children in their learning last year and during the current school session. Staff are now engaging with a new tracking system which supports more rigorous and detailed monitoring of individual progress. Analysis of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) data shows that no child at Arnage Primary School lives in an area of deprivation. No children are registered for free school meals. As a result, the school is at the early stages of developing approaches to equity and closing any related attainment gap.
- The headteacher analyses attainment data to inform professional dialogue around children's progress in learning. Data from standardised testing is used to identify concerns and address factors involved. Children are setting targets in their learning and these targets are reviewed in discussion with the teacher or PSA. Staff are at an early stage of using data analysis.

### Attainment in literacy

- Overall, the majority of children are making satisfactory progress in literacy. The majority of children have achieved the appropriate Curriculum for Excellence levels in reading and writing.

### Listening and Talking

- Across the school, children communicate regularly with each other in small groups and in activities with a partner. The majority of children in P1-3 listen well to peers when they are talking. A few find it difficult to take turns in speaking during conversations and discussions. In class lessons the majority of children in P1-3 do not always listen well to explanations or instructions. A few children find it difficult to listen and to follow a list of tasks. Children in P4-7 listen very well during group, paired and whole class activities. Most children can articulate clearly their thoughts and opinions when asked. A few have very extensive vocabularies. Most children enjoy sharing their personal stories and they have good recall of events in their lives. They talk excitedly about subjects that they find interesting.

### Reading

- Overall, the majority of children are making good progress in reading. Children who were secure in the early level could talk with enthusiasm about their favourite authors. They could

describe the main characters and outline aspects of the plot. The majority of children who have achieved the first level could read aloud confidently and accurately. They could describe the genre, discuss the main characters and how they were important to the plot in the book they selected. The school took part in the First Minister's Reading Challenge in an effort to improve children's reading skills and instil a love for literacy.

## **Writing**

- Overall, the majority of children are making satisfactory progress with their writing. Children who have achieved the early level are writing in short sentences or have their ideas scribed. They can illustrate their stories well. They now need to write more often in other areas of the curriculum. Children who have achieved first level set success criteria for their written work and they assess how well they have achieved their targets. By P7, children are writing longer pieces of imaginative writing. The quality of presentation varies across the school. Across the school, children could be making better progress in writing. They need to write more often and at length by the time they are secure in first level. Children need to apply their writing skills more consistently across all areas of the curriculum. Teachers should develop, share and apply agreed standards for presentation in written work across the school to support children to produce their best work.

## **Attainment in numeracy**

- Most children are making satisfactory progress and are reaching expected levels of attainment at the appropriate time, with a few exceeding these. Children enjoy their learning in numeracy and mathematics and have regular opportunities to apply their learning in real life contexts. Learning experiences are differentiated, particularly for older children. Numeracy is a priority for the school and teachers have analysed children's performance data to help them identify areas for improvement. A new, whole school approach to learning and teaching in numeracy and mathematics is currently in preparation. The headteacher and staff are confident that this will help to address areas of concern, such as children's mental agility. At the time of the inspection there had been limited opportunities for children to develop skills of information handling in numeracy. Children across the school would benefit from more effective planning of learning of all concepts in mathematics and numeracy to ensure that children build on prior learning as they move through the school.

## **Number, money and measurement**

- By the end of the early level, most children can count with confidence and are developing strategies to work with simple addition and subtraction. They can choose from a list of items to plan a party within a budget and can recognise and add coins up to 10 pence. Most children across the middle stages have a good grasp of their number work. They can demonstrate their understanding and use of money, for example, in shopping for basic items to a budget. They can use and understand simple fractions and can measure everyday objects such as shoelaces and clothes. In the upper stages, children have a good understanding of number and measurement. They can apply the order of basic operations to problems and demonstrate understanding of place value in decimal numbers. Children can increasingly use a range of mental strategies to solve problems with whole numbers. They can apply their learning about money in real life contexts such as spending pocket money or buying lunch. A good example of this was an enterprise project where children baked and sold cookies.

## **Shape, position and movement**

- Children working at early and first level are able to identify the properties of 2D shapes and enjoy creating pictures and constructing basic geometric shapes. They have explored pattern

by making 'Arnage tartans' using coloured paper. At the upper stages children are able to measure and draw basic right, reflex, acute and obtuse angles and identify the properties of basic 3D objects.

### **Information handling**

- Throughout the school, children have a few opportunities to present data using graphs and charts. They are able to use the data to identify information.

### **Achievement**

- Children at Arnage school benefit from opportunities for wider achievement, both in and out of school. This includes after-school clubs and activities, such as jogging, gardening and cycling. Children are encouraged to participate in these and their wider achievements are celebrated through a wall display and at assemblies. These activities are helping to develop children's confidence and skills.
- The school has developed its own achievement scheme which links children's wider achievements, their participation in school-based activities and their learning through a skills for life framework. This is supporting the development of skills in relation to Achieving, Responsibility, Nature, Active, Growth Mindset and Effort (ARNAGE). For example, children need to achieve their targets in learning before they can earn an achievement badge and to do this they must explain to the headteacher how they have met their targets. The achievement badge can still be earned if the target has not been fully met but progress can still be evidenced by the child. Children's progress in developing these skills is being tracked across the school. There is scope to now support children to identify more explicitly the skills, which they are developing through participation in wider achievement opportunities and link this with their on-going work on developing skills for learning, life and work. This can help to inform planning so that teachers will be able to ensure that children experience progression and coherence in their learning and achieve to their full potential.
- Children who face particular challenges in their lives, or who face barriers to learning, are well supported in school. There is a clear ethos of inclusion and support among all staff and children. Most are making steady progress in literacy and numeracy from their previous levels of attainment.

## Setting choice of QI: 2.5 Family learning

- Engaging families in learning
  - Early intervention and prevention
  - Quality of family learning programmes
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- Staff know children and families well and are aware of, and work to reduce, potential barriers to learning for children and families. Needs are identified in consultation with families and other agencies are engaged as appropriate where additional support is required. There is scope to further develop partnership working, and to further empower parents and carers, to develop family learning in order to support children's progress and promote lifelong learning.
  - The school organises a number of opportunities for families to discuss their learning with staff and set appropriate targets for next stages. At present these are largely driven by individual circumstances. A few parents have approached the school to seek support with learning and they feel comfortable and confident to do so. Consideration has been given to the production and distribution of support packs for parents of children entering P1 and this could be worth developing further and extending to parents of older children. The headteacher and staff are aware of the need to reflect on the range of individual engagements in order to develop a more coherent and planned universal offer around family learning.
  - Overall parents and carers are well supported to actively and meaningfully engage in their children's learning and life at school. Staff are working effectively with them to reduce potential barriers to learning, such as where English is an additional language. Parents are currently involved in providing additional and interesting contexts for learning, for example in relation to gardening, literacy, language, numeracy and technology. Staff should continue to work with parents to showcase these existing successes to encourage more parents and carers and develop their confidence to work with the school. This will help to identify and develop appropriate opportunities and contexts for family learning. It may also help to identify families where needs are similar so that they can help to support each other.
  - The school has a prominent role as a community hub and is well placed to build on its current engagement with parents and carers to further develop effective family learning. Existing events such as the Christmas Fayre, coffee mornings and Community Café can be helpfully developed to promote more opportunities for stakeholder involvement and cooperation, for example, in further enhancing the role of partners and providing enterprise related roles and learning for children.

## Explanation of terms of quality

The following standard Education Scotland terms of quality 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.