

# Summarised inspection findings

**Dalmally Primary School**

Argyll and Bute Council

21 February 2023

## Key contextual information

Dalmally Primary School and Pre Five unit are situated in the Dalmally area of Argyll and Bute. The school serves the communities of Dalmally, Lochawe, Stronmilchan and Bridge of Orchy. The headteacher has a 0.5 teaching commitment. Currently the school has a roll of 37 children across two multicomposite classes. A significant number of children attending the school have additional support needs. The school receives a very small amount of Pupil Equity Funding (PEF). All children live in Scottish Area of Multiple Deprivation area five.

### 1.3 Leadership of change

**satisfactory**

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 and staff worked well together to manage the challenges they faced during the COVID-19 pandemic. They provided effective support to children and families during periods of remote learning. Staff prioritised rightly children's wellbeing last session when the school buildings reopened. They embedded nurturing approaches across the school. As a result, children are happy, secure and settled at school.
- The headteacher recently worked with children in P5 to P7 to refresh the school vision, values and aims. Children were keen to ensure the vision, values and aims were clear and understood by all learners. The refreshed vision 'working together to achieve our goals' is prominently displayed within the school. Children are proud of the posters they created to explain what the values of fun, fairness, ambition, respect and healthy lifestyles mean to them. The headteacher should continue to work with parents and partners to raise the profile of the vision and values across the school community. She should use the values to inform future development work.
- The headteacher is aware that the pandemic had a negative impact on the pace of change. The standards and quality report outlines clearly where progress has been slower than planned. For example, raising attainment in writing. The headteacher has rightly carried forward improvement priorities to give more time to implement the plans. She has planned future improvements over a three-year period with a focus on raising attainment and improving further approaches to learning and teaching. The headteacher should continue to review these priorities with children, parents and staff using robust self-evaluation evidence. This should ensure priorities reflect the school values and are ambitious for children at Dalmally Primary School. Staff and parents are eager to increase the pace of change.
- All staff work well together as a team. They know children and families well and have a strong understanding of the opportunities and challenges that arise in their rural location. For example, the economic challenges faced by families living remotely and employed in seasonal work. All staff have engaged in meaningful professional learning to support children's emotional wellbeing. They have also undertaken training to support children with language and communication difficulties. This is having a positive impact on children's experiences across the school. In particular, the use of visual timetables and introduction of calm spaces is

beginning to support children to access their learning. Staff should build on this professional learning to continue to improve learning experiences for all children.

- Children across the school are part of four school councils. Children in the councils talk positively about the contribution they make to the life of the school. The reading council members are proud of the events they planned to celebrate Book Week Scotland. The sports council have recently introduced a few lunchtime clubs. A majority of children believe the school takes their views into account. A few children are not sure if their views are listened to and acted upon. The headteacher should continue to plan opportunities for children to evaluate the work of the school and contribute to school improvement.
- The school benefits from a supportive Parent Council. However, pandemic mitigations limited support the Parent Council was able to provide. They were involved recently in the local authority consultation on collective leadership. The Parent Council gathered and shared the views of the parent forum. This ensured parents views were shared, and taken into account, when decisions were made about potential changes to the way the school was led. They are now keen to restart projects that were planned before the pandemic, for example, the development of the school grounds. The headteacher should now support parents to be more involved in planning improvements and evaluating the work of the school.
- The headteacher has a quality assurance calendar in place. Local authority staff have undertaken visits to classrooms. They provided clear, written feedback highlighting what is working well and areas for staff to develop further. The headteacher should work with staff to develop further approaches to quality assurance with a clear focus on improving learning and teaching and raising attainment.
- The headteacher uses PEF to fund universal support to improve children's wellbeing. For example, all children participate in an outdoor experience to support resilience delivered by an outdoor education provider. The headteacher has plans to use PEF to employ additional support staff in term three. The additional staff will provide targeted literacy and numeracy support for identified children. Moving forward it will be important to carefully plan, monitor and evaluate the impact of this support in closing the poverty related attainment gap.

## 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

- Children benefit from a nurturing, inclusive learning environment that reflects well the recently refreshed vision, values and aims. Led by the headteacher, all staff have a significant focus on the care and welfare of all children. They show a strong commitment to the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child. All staff know children and families well. Children throughout the school are friendly, articulate and well-mannered. They are considerate of one another and of visitors to the school.
- Across the school most children engage well in their learning. Almost all children work well in pairs and groups. They are respectful of each other and participate well in class discussions. In a few lessons, the pace of learning is too slow. Teachers should increase the pace of learning to ensure children remain focused on their learning tasks.
- In all lessons, teachers share the purpose of the learning well with children. They help children to understand how to be successful in their learning. Teachers meet the needs of all children well. Staff give clear instructions and explanations to children about learning activities. They use questioning effectively in most lessons to check for understanding and to support children in developing their thinking skills.
- Staff have developed successfully approaches to learning through play. They have developed a range of interesting learning spaces with children indoors and outdoors. Most children engage in developmentally appropriate experiences through play. They sustain their concentration and engage well with these opportunities.
- Staff make good use of a range of digital technology to enhance children's learning experiences. Children use tablet computers confidently in class to access online learning platforms and games. They record their learning and progress successfully by taking photographs, videos and recording commentary. Children enjoy using robotic toys which is developing their understanding of coding and programming.
- Staff have developed processes to assess children's progress and attainment within and across Curriculum for Excellence (CFE) levels. They have developed an annual calendar of summative and standardised assessments. Teachers use a range of assessment for learning strategies to further support their judgements about children's progress. They plan effectively for children to apply skills in unfamiliar situations to assess how secure their learning is. This supports them to identify children's next steps.
- Staff have shared expectations of standards to be achieved and engage routinely in moderation across the school with a focus on literacy and numeracy. Teachers recognise the importance of looking outwards from the school and are planning to engage in moderation with colleagues from local schools.

- Teachers plan learning together over the long, medium, and short term. They ensure children's interests are taken into account and plan opportunities for children to lead their learning. Teachers take real-life global and community issues into account where possible. This is helping children to understand their local community and the world in which they live. Teachers plan effectively for multicomposite classes. They ensure learning experiences are planned at the right level of difficulty for all learners.
- Teachers collect a significant amount of data about each child's current level of attainment in reading, writing, listening, talking and numeracy. They identify accurately the level of progress children are making in these areas. They now need to use this data more effectively to plan specific interventions for those children who are not making appropriate progress.
- Planning and attainment meetings take place four times a year. Teachers share information about children's attainment with the headteacher. These discussions should now have a greater focus on individual children's specific strengths and barriers to learning. The headteacher needs to agree with class teachers clear, specific actions they will take to support children overcome any barriers to learning. This should allow the headteacher and teachers to make sure children are making the best possible progress. It will also help them evaluate the effectiveness of supports and interventions.

## 2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- Staff have developed a clear curriculum statement to inform their planning. They take account of the four contexts for learning when planning experiences for children across the school. The headteacher is at the early stages of supporting children to reflect on the range of learning that takes place within and beyond the classroom. Children are beginning to link their learning to the four capacities.
- Teachers plan using progression pathways in literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics. This is ensuring children experience depth and breadth in literacy and numeracy. Teachers use a range of guidance documents and resources to plan other areas of the curriculum. This ensures coverage of the experiences and outcomes. Teachers should develop progression pathways to ensure all children experience breadth and depth across all areas of the curriculum.
- Teachers plan contexts for learning well to meet the needs of the multicomposite classes. They create a flexible annual overview taking account of children's needs and interests. Teachers should continue to plan learning taking account of the unique context of the school.
- Children across the school enjoy learning Gaelic. They participate in online lessons and learning planned by their teachers. Children's learning in Gaelic is enriched through participation in events with local partners promoting Gaelic language and music.
- Children enjoy learning outdoors. Teachers plan learning in the school grounds and local community. Children particularly enjoy learning in the community orchard. Teachers are building on this positive start through researching approaches to outdoor learning. They should now use their learning to develop a progressive outdoor learning programme.
- The headteacher is aware children are not receiving their entitlement to two hours of quality physical education each week. She should review timetables with staff to ensure two hours of physical education is planned and delivered each week as a matter of urgency.

## 2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- Post pandemic, the school is working hard to re-establish all the activities within school that families enjoy. Parents have been in school to celebrate events such as Book Week Scotland and the opening of the new outdoor classroom. These events are helping parents to learn more about children's experiences at school. Parents would welcome more opportunities to participate in activities in school with their children.
- Teachers share a helpful transition booklet with parents at the start of each year. They include information about staff children will work with and approaches they will use to support wellbeing. The headteacher shares information about school life and events through a detailed termly newsletter.
- Parents receive two written reports and are offered two meetings with teachers each year. This provides opportunities for parents to hear about their own children's progress and achievements in learning. Parents can choose to have the meetings in person or virtually. This flexibility is meeting well the needs of working parents and parents who live in remote locations.
- Children enjoy sharing work with their parents through their online journals. They select examples of work they are proud of and share photos, text and audio clips. Over time, this will help parents to understand more fully how their children are making progress.

## 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

satisfactory

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

- Children at Dalmally Primary School learn in a nurturing, caring environment. All staff have engaged in professional learning to support and improve children's wellbeing. This ensures there is a strong, shared understanding of the relationship between children's wellbeing and their progress and achievement. Children experience positive relationships with staff and their peers. They interact well with each other, staff and visitors to the school. Staff make effective use of restorative approaches to help children manage disagreements when they arise. Almost all children believe the school helps them to understand and respect other people.
- Children benefit from a flexible start to the school day. They can come into the school before the bell rings, get ready for the day and participate in a range of activities. This ensures the start of the day is calm and quiet. Staff support children to complete a daily check-in during this time. Staff monitor and respond to any worries or concerns children share at this point of the day. As a result, any wellbeing concerns are responded to quickly. Most children can identify a trusted adult in school and are confident they can go to them if they are worried or upset.
- All children use wellbeing webs across the year to reflect on their wellbeing. Staff use this information well to identify areas where children may need support. They talk to children to plan experiences to improve their wellbeing. For example, a few children identified gardening as an activity that helps them to manage their emotions. Teachers should build on this to support all children to identify a range of ways in which they can actively improve their wellbeing.
- Children are developing an understanding of the wellbeing indicators. Younger children use characters to identify behaviours and actions linked to a range of feelings and emotions. Children engage with older members of the community through the 'Forever Young Group' and plant vegetables and herbs in the community orchard. They are proud of the valuable contributions they make to the wider community. Teachers should continue to work with children to deepen their understanding of the wellbeing indicators. This should support children to develop a shared language to discuss their wellbeing.
- Teachers have prioritised children's emotional health within the curriculum following the pandemic. Children explore some other aspects of health across the year. They show their knowledge of healthy eating by creating a recipe book. Children harvest the crops they grow in the school garden and the cook uses them in the school kitchen. The headteacher and teachers should now develop a broad and progressive health and wellbeing curriculum. This should ensure children develop a stronger understanding of their health and wellbeing across all organisers.
- The local authority submitted self-evaluation information relating to compliance with the revised Nutritional Regulations 2020 and key duties, as required by The Schools (Health Promotion

and Nutrition) (Scotland) Act 2007. The Health and Nutrition Inspector (HNI) discussed this information with relevant staff and examined documentation relating to the effectiveness of whole school health promotion duties as far as they relate to food and nutrition. Areas for development have been agreed with the school and the school meals provider.

- All staff understand the long and short-term barriers to learning children may face. They are particularly skilled at identifying potential barriers linked to language and communication and emotional wellbeing. Almost all children with emotional needs and language and communication needs access appropriate support. The principal teacher ensures targeted support is planned and monitored through a child's plan. She gathers the views of children and parents within the plans. A few children would benefit from having their plans reviewed more frequently. The headteacher should now ensure all children who receive additional support with their learning have the support planned and regularly reviewed. This will help staff to measure the impact of support and interventions more effectively.
- Staff support children to celebrate and value diversity and inclusion through a range of school events. The pupil council organised Downs Syndrome Awareness Day and raised money for the children's hospital. Children in P1 to P4 are using simple signing throughout their nativity play. These events and activities support children to value their differences and similarities. Teachers should build on this as they develop the health and wellbeing curriculum. They should plan opportunities to help children deepen their understanding of diversity and challenge discrimination across a range of protected characteristics.
- Support for learning assistants provide effective support for individual children and small groups in and out of class. This is enabling children who require additional support to access their learning and make satisfactory progress against their individual targets. The headteacher now needs to work with class teachers to identify specific attainment gaps, particularly for children facing challenges. This should ensure staff make progress in closing attainment gaps for the most vulnerable children.

### 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

#### Attainment in literacy and numeracy

- The number of children at each stage varies and is relatively small. Overall statements have been made about attainment and progress to ensure individuals are not identified. A significant number of children across the school have additional support needs. These children are working towards individual targets based on prior levels of attainment.
- Periods of remote learning have had a negative impact on children's attainment. School data shows some progress is being made towards raising attainment to pre-pandemic levels.
- School achievement of a level data for session 2021/22 shows that a majority of children achieved appropriate CfE levels in listening and talking, reading and numeracy and mathematics. A minority of children achieved appropriate CfE levels in writing. Overall, a majority of children are making satisfactory progress in literacy and numeracy. Overall, children with additional support needs are making satisfactory progress against their individual targets.

#### Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall attainment in literacy and English is satisfactory.

#### Listening and talking

- Overall, children are making good progress in listening and talking. Across the school, children communicate confidently and articulately. They interact positively with staff and their peers. Almost all children talk confidently to a range of adults in school. Most children listen attentively to the teacher to follow instructions. As children progress through the school, they make appropriate progress in turn-taking and sharing their ideas and opinions. They offer their views and build on the ideas of others in group and class discussions. Children now need to develop their skills in asking and answering questions to extend their learning and understanding with their peers in a range of contexts.

#### Reading

- Overall, children are making satisfactory progress in reading. Younger children recognise an increasing range of blends and sounds. They use this knowledge to decode new words. Older children answer simple questions about their reading book. They show good understanding of grammar and punctuation to read aloud fluently and with expression. They discuss confidently key features of their reading books. Across the school children are not reading often enough in class. Younger children need to read aloud regularly with their teacher. Older children need to explore a wider range of texts to develop their understanding of author style and genre.

## Writing

- Overall, children are making satisfactory progress in writing from prior levels of attainment. Younger children write a few sentences using capital letters and full stops accurately. They are beginning to use adjectives to add interesting detail to their stories. A majority of children across the school need to use punctuation more accurately to ensure their writing makes sense to the reader. Overall, children do not get sufficient opportunities to write regularly at length.

## Numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, attainment in numeracy and mathematics is satisfactory.

## Number, money and measure

- By P7, a majority of children round numbers to 100,000. They have a good understanding of place value in numbers up to 100,000. A majority add and subtract confidently however most require further practice in multiplication and division. A majority of children identify simple fractions, decimals and percentages appropriate to their stage of development. Across the school, children are not yet confident in identifying and using appropriate coins to buy goods or give change.

## Shape, position and movement

- Across the school, most children work well with an increasing range of two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects. By P7, children use simple mathematical language to describe the properties of two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects. They identify and name right, acute, obtuse and reflex angles. Across the school, children understand and apply the rules of symmetry appropriate to their stage of development. Children across the school are not yet confident in applying their knowledge to solve problems.

## Information handling

- Overall, children need to build confidence in using their knowledge to gather, display and use data. Children in the early stages sort using a range of criterion. By P7, children explain confidently how they would organise and carry out a simple survey, record the responses as tally marks on a chart and display the results. They are familiar with bar graphs, line graphs and pie charts but less familiar with Venn diagrams.

## Attainment over time

- Overall, children are making satisfactory progress in literacy and numeracy over time, from their prior levels of attainment.
- The headteacher uses the local authority tracking system to record individual children's progress over time. She is aware that year on year, attainment figures fluctuate due to ongoing changes in the school roll. The headteacher is working with local authority officers to develop approaches to track progress and attainment more rigorously. This will support staff to more clearly identify and address any gaps in learning.

## Overall quality of learner's achievements

- Children in P5 to P7 participate in the young leader training programme. They use the skills and knowledge gained to run clubs and activities for younger children. Children across the school raise funds for charity. They can discuss confidently the contribution they make to the wider community through this work.
- The school celebrates children's achievements from school and from home in a floorbook and during assemblies. Children share their achievements through their online learning journals.

They work with staff to choose which achievements they want to post and share with their families. Staff now need to develop a system to support children to identify and track the skills children are developing. This should support children to make links between their achievements, learning and progress.

### **Equity for all learners**

- All staff have a strong understanding of the range of barriers to learning children may face. They are particularly aware of the unique opportunities and challenges children living in a rural community may face. Children participate in outreach activities in school facilitated by an outdoor education service. As a result, children access outdoor learning activities without the cost of a residential trip. The headteacher uses PEF to provide universal support across the school with a focus on building resilience. She is working with the local authority to develop approaches to use data to identify the poverty related attainment gap. In taking this forward the headteacher and staff should have a stronger focus on accelerated progress in closing the poverty related attainment gap.

## 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.