Summarised inspection findings

Cults Primary School

Aberdeen City Council

5 March 2024

Key contextual information

Cults Primary School is a non-denominational primary school that serves the catchment area of Cults and Bieldside, in Aberdeen. The current school roll is 643, organised over across 22 classes. Sixty-four children attend the early learning and childcare setting. Most children live in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) data zones nine and ten. 22% of children have English as an additional language. A minority of children have additional support needs. In 2022/23 school attendance was 94.59%, which is above the national average and there were no cases of exclusion.

There have been recent changes in the senior leadership team. At the time of the inspection, the acting headteacher was supported by a depute headteacher and an acting depute headteacher. There is currently an acting depute headteacher vacancy. The acting headteacher took up post in August 2023. Her substantive post is depute headteacher at Cults Primary School. One of the school's principal teachers took on the role of acting depute headteacher in the interim.

Cults Primary School nursery class was inspected by the Care Inspectorate within the past 18 months, therefore the local authority and headteacher had the option to include the nursery class as part of this inspection. We have agreed with the local authority and school that the nursery class is not part of this inspection. The findings set out below are for the primary school stages.

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 at Cults Primary School are articulate and respectful when speaking with adults and peers. They reflect the school values and their class charters in their interactions with others. Relationships between children, their peers and staff are positive and caring. This helps to create a relaxed, inclusive and nurturing learning environment. They are polite and friendly towards others and cooperate effectively during collaborative learning activities. In almost all classrooms, the ethos is productive and calm. Teachers create and use attractive displays to celebrate, motivate and support children's learning across the curriculum. Almost all children are settled and attentive during lessons.

■   In almost all lessons, children are engaged actively in their learning. They are motivated and enthusiastic, demonstrating a willingness to contribute to discussions and share their skills, knowledge and opinions. Teachers should provide children with more opportunities to make choices across the curriculum. They should support children to lead and extend their own learning more often.

- All children participate in two hours of high-quality physical education every week. This takes place in the gym hall and within the school grounds. All children now need more opportunities to experience outdoor learning across the whole curriculum. This would provide them with a valuable context to support their learning and develop their curiosity and creativity further.

- Children at the early level have regular opportunities to learn through play. Teachers collaborate to create a responsive, stimulating and well-resourced learning environment that promotes curiosity and exploration. Teachers would now benefit from engagement with national practice guidance in relation to play pedagogy. This would support them to develop further the role of the adult in providing high-quality interactions during play and in using observations to gather evidence of children's learning.

- Almost all teachers use digital technology effectively to support and motivate children in almost all lessons. The newly introduced digital skills framework is supporting teachers well to develop children's digital skills progressively. Children are successfully developing their skill and confidence in using a variety of technologies with confidence, such as tablets, laptops and applications. Older children use digital devices regularly to create extended pieces of writing. They use word processing tools well to organise and edit their writing. All children enjoy using a range of relevant online games and apps to extend and consolidate their learning.

- In almost all lessons, teacher's instructions and explanations are clear. They share the purpose of learning and support children effectively to understand how they can be successful. As a result, most children know what is expected of them. In a few lessons, the intended learning and measures of success are matched clearly to the specific learning needs of individuals or groups of children. Teachers now need to use this approach more consistently across the school. They should also involve children more fully in identifying what success looks like. This will help children to identify and reflect on their own individual learning targets and develop further their understanding of their own progress.

- Almost all teachers use plenary sessions well across the school to support children to reflect on their learning. In most lessons, teachers use effective questioning to check children's understanding. They have identified correctly that they should continue to develop further their questioning skills to deepen and extend children's learning. Across the school, there is a need for teachers to provide learning activities that are more appropriately matched to children's level of ability. Children require greater challenge in their learning to support them to make the best possible progress across all areas of the curriculum.

- As children move through the school, they are developing skills and confidence in assessing their own learning and that of their peers. They know that feedback to others should be relevant and kind. In most lessons, teachers use oral feedback well to support children in their learning. Almost all teachers write comments in jotters which children value. However, the quality of this feedback is variable. A more consistent approach to high-quality feedback would help children understand better what they are doing well and what they need to do to improve.

- Teachers use a range of formative and summative assessment approaches including data from Scottish National Standardised Assessments. They use the assessment information effectively to plan next steps for individuals and groups of children. Recently, they have worked collaboratively to begin to develop a range of high-quality assessments for other curriculum areas across all stages. Senior leaders and teachers should review assessment approaches to develop a more consistent and robust approach to gathering evidence of

children's progress across the school. This will help to support their shared understanding of children's progress across the curriculum.

■ Across the school, there is a strong ethos of staff collegiality and positive working relationships. Teachers work very well together and moderate literacy and numeracy across classes effectively. They use the national Benchmarks to make valid and reliable judgements about attainment of a level. This is leading to a shared understanding of expectations. Teachers have identified correctly the need to take part in further moderation activity with colleagues from other stages as well as other schools in the authority. This should strengthen further their understanding of National Benchmarks and the accuracy of judgements about children's progress and attainment across all areas of the curriculum.

■ Almost all teachers use assessment data effectively to provide useful information for parents at regular points throughout the year. They share information about children's current progress and predicted attainment. Senior leaders and teachers should continue to develop approaches to sharing children's next steps in learning and involve parents fully in this process.

■ Teachers have a range of processes in place to support the transition of children as they move from one class to the next. Teachers produce detailed records of attainment, progress and next steps based on a range of assessment information. Senior leaders should work with teachers to monitor that this information is used effectively. This will help to ensure that children experience appropriate pace and challenge which builds on their prior learning.

■ Across the school, teachers use locally developed progressive pathways well to plan learning across the curriculum. These plans are based on the experiences and outcomes of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE). Teachers should now ensure that assessment is a key part of their planning. This will support them to plan learning that meets all children's needs.

■ Senior leaders meet with teachers termly to track the progress of all children. During these meetings, they identify successfully children who would benefit from further support to make more progress in their learning. This includes children who are impacted negatively by their socio-economic circumstances. Class teachers meet with support for learning staff and support assistants to plan learning that meets individual children's needs appropriately. This planning is informed by the views of children and their parents. As a next step, senior leaders should include information about progression within a level to make tracking and monitoring processes more robust.

2.1 Safeguarding and child protection

■ The school submitted self-evaluation information related to child protection and safeguarding. Inspectors discussed this information with relevant staff and, where appropriate, children. In addition, inspectors examined a sample of safeguarding documentation. At the time of the inspection, there were no identified areas for development.

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

- Data provided by the school shows that for session 2022/23, almost all children at early and second levels achieved national standards in literacy and numeracy. Most children at first level achieved national standards in literacy and numeracy. Across the school, a few children exceeded national expectations in both literacy and numeracy.

- Most children in P1, P4 and P7 are on track to achieve expected national standards in literacy and numeracy this session. With additional challenge, there is potential for more children to make accelerated progress.

- Most children who require additional support with their learning make good progress towards their individual targets.

Attainment in literacy and English
- Overall, most children, including those who have English as an additional language, are making good progress from prior levels of attainment. A few children are making very good progress.

Listening and talking
- Across the school, almost all children listen well to adults and peers in a range of situations. At early level, most children follow instructions well and can take turns appropriately. At first level, most children respond to others respectfully by answering questions. A few children require more support to take turns when speaking in class discussions. At second level, most children apply a range of techniques confidently when delivering presentations, for example, use of vocabulary, eye contact, body language, emphasis, pace and tone. Children at second level would benefit from increased opportunities to practise speaking to a wider range of audiences.

Reading
- Across the school, children benefit from access to a wide range of interesting reading materials provided by the class and school library. Children enjoy choosing books to read for pleasure and are confident in explaining their preferences for different types of books. Children have regular opportunities for personal reading. This is supporting the creation of a culture of reading for pleasure.

- At early level, most children are beginning to use known sounds and familiar words to read sentences and stories. They use context clues well to help them understand what they are reading. At first level, most children read fluently and with expression. Most children are confident in making predictions and summarising texts. At second level, most children share their thoughts about structure, characters and setting confidently. A few require further

practice responding to a range of more challenging questions about texts, including inferential questions.

Writing

■ At early level, children are developing their confidence in writing simple sentences using capital letters and finger spaces. They would benefit from more opportunities to write independently and through play. At first level, most children identify and use verbs, nouns and connectives accurately in their writing. They explain the features of recounts and instructions. Most children at second level write confidently to persuade and evaluate information. They are less confident in using figurative language to engage their reader.

■ Across the school, children would benefit from more frequent opportunities to write independently across the curriculum. This would help them to develop better writing skills and techniques. Teachers should support all children to improve the presentation of written work.

Numeracy and mathematics

■ Overall, most children are making good progress from prior levels of attainment. A few children are making very good progress.

Number, money and measure

■ At early level, most children partition quantities to 10 into two parts successfully. They are developing their confidence in mental addition and subtraction within 10. At first level, almost all children round numbers confidently to the nearest 10 and 100. They can identify correctly the value of each digit in a whole number with three digits. They are less confident identifying the link between analogue clocks and 24-hour notation. At second level, most children add and subtract whole numbers and decimal fractions to two decimal places. They need more practice solving simple algebraic equations.

Shape, position and movement

■ At early level, most children recognise, describe and sort two-dimensional shapes according to various simple criteria. They are less confident using positional language. At first level, most children know and use the compass points successfully to describe directions. They are developing their skills in describing and recording directions using words associated with angles including right turn, half turn, clockwise and anticlockwise. At second level, almost all children understand the relationship between three-dimensional objects and their nets. They are less confident using supplementary and complementary angles.

Information handling

■ At early level, most children use pictorial displays successfully to present data. They are developing their skills in interpreting simple graphs and charts. At first level, almost all children extract key information from bar charts and tables. They use tally tables successfully to organise data. At second level, most children analyse and draw conclusions effectively from a variety of sources including line graphs and pie charts. Across the school, children would benefit from further opportunities to develop their information handling skills, including using digital technology to support their learning.

Attainment over time

■ School attainment data shows that attainment in literacy and numeracy at key stages has remained high over a period of years. Staff ensured continuity of learning throughout periods of home learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. This helped to ensure children did not experience gaps in their learning during that period. Staff have continued to maintain children's levels of attainment. They check the progress of individual children regularly and put

interventions in place as soon as children are identified as being at risk of not making good progress.

■ Senior leaders have developed a system to track attainment in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. This system does not yet provide information over time to track literacy and numeracy for individual children and cohorts easily. Senior leaders and staff should continue to refine systems to ensure they capture the learning journey of individual children and cohorts of children over time. This will allow them to identify the most appropriate priorities for improvement to raise attainment and achievement for all children. As planned, senior leaders and staff should continue to develop systems to demonstrate children's progress across other areas of the curriculum over time.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

■ Children are proud of their achievements in and out of school. They celebrate achievements at assemblies and more widely through whole school displays, newsletters and online platforms. Working together as a school community, children have received recognition through national awards, including for their work on children's rights and digital technologies. These approaches are helping to build children's confidence and self-esteem.

■ All children contribute to improving the school. Senior leaders use reflective questions from "How good is OUR school?" regularly to gather children's views on their learning and the life of the school. As a result, children know that their opinions are valued and acted upon. Across the school, children participate in a range of pupil leadership groups including eco committee, health committee and pupil council. As a result, children are developing skills in decision making, problem solving and collaboration. At P7, children speak enthusiastically about leadership responsibilities such as being digital leaders, science technicians and playground helpers. A few older children lead lunchtime clubs for other children to attend. Through these roles children develop skills in reasoning, resilience, organisation and communication.

■ Staff work effectively with partners including Active Schools to offer children a range of after-school clubs such as cricket, football, martial arts, running and tennis. Children enjoy attending these clubs. They are learning new skills, including teamwork, and game strategy.

■ Senior leaders and staff track and celebrate children's wider achievements. This helps senior leaders identify children who are at risk of missing out. They are able to encourage those children to take part in clubs and activities in school and the wider community. As a next step, staff should support children to understand and talk about the various skills for learning life and work they are developing through the wide range of clubs and groups.

Equity for all learners

■ Senior leaders and staff understand the socio-economic background of children and of challenges affecting families in the school community. They ensure financial constraints do not prevent any children from taking part in learning and achievement activities. Staff provide free clubs, clothing, and equipment, and ensure all children have access to digital technologies to support their learning. Senior leaders have created in partnership with the school community, a 'Cost of the School Day statement'. This is helpful in signposting support available to reduce financial barriers for children and families participating in school and extra-curricular activities.

■ Senior leaders are using Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) in a targeted way effectively to raise attainment in literacy and numeracy. Currently, funding is used for additional staffing to support identified cohorts of children with their learning. Senior leaders and staff review the impact of interventions termly through regular planned attainment tracking meetings. This helps them to identify the progress of individual children and plan further support. Children are

making accelerated progress in their literacy and numeracy. Senior leaders should now monitor and collate the impact of inventions more frequently. This will provide helpful data to better inform strategic decision-making.

Other relevant evidence

■ Senior leaders have consulted with pupils and the Parent Council on how best to invest PEF. As planned, senior leaders should consult with the school community more widely including staff and partners.

■ Attendance at Cults Primary School has been above the national average for the last three years. Senior leaders monitor and track attendance regularly. Staff work in partnership with families and the local authority to address any concerns at an early stage. Staff monitor late arrivals to school and offer support through discussions with parents.

■ Children at all stages learn French. From the early level onwards, they experience progressive lessons that develop their knowledge of the French language. Across the school, children learn Scots language through a whole school learning context. Older children participate in a Scots language poetry event annually.

■ The school submitted self-evaluation information related to compliance with the Nutritional Regulations and key duties as required by The Schools (Health Promotion and Nutrition) (Scotland) Act 2007(the Act). Health and Nutrition Inspectors discussed this information with relevant staff and children. In addition, inspectors examined a sample of documentation relating to the effectiveness of whole school approaches to improving the health and wellbeing of children through food in school. A few areas for development have been agreed with the school and the education authority.

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.