

Summarised inspection findings

Seamab School

19 September 2023

Key contextual information

Seamab School is an all-through independent special school located within Perth and Kinross Council. The school provides education for up to 26 children and young people from five years of age through to 18 years of age. At the time of inspection, 21 children and young people were on the school roll. Most children and young people reside within one of Seamab's residential houses, located out with the school campus. All children and young people have significant additional support needs and require a high level of targeted support to access education.

Seamab School, and its residential settings, are governed by a Board of Trustees and a Chief Executive Officer (CEO). The school is led by a Head of Education (HoE) and Education Service Manager (ESM). The HoE has strategic responsibility for all aspects of school activity. The ESM has strategic and operational responsibility for outdoor activities. The HoE very recently took up post in June 2023, following a short period of being the acting HoE. The HoE and ESM lead a team of teachers and educational support workers in providing education for children and young people. The school has recruited the majority of its teachers since 2021 in order to replace teachers who left the school.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

weak

This indicator focuses on ensuring high-quality learning experiences for all children and young people. It highlights the importance of highly-skilled staff who work with children, young people and others to ensure learning is motivating and meaningful. Effective use of assessment by staff and learners ensures children and young people maximise their successes and achievements. The themes are:

- learning and engagement
- quality of teaching
- effective use of assessment
- planning, tracking and monitoring

- Staff work effectively to establish and maintain positive relationships with all children and young people. As a result of this approach, children and young people experience a caring ethos that motivates them to attend the school. They enjoy learning in the outdoors, which develops their skills of working together in a range of contexts. While school leaders have supported staff to improve the ethos and culture of the school very well, there are important weaknesses in the quality of learning, teaching and assessment. Staff's expectations of what children and young people can achieve are not high enough. Teachers do not take full account of children and young people's skills and capabilities when planning learning. As a result, children are not sufficiently challenged in their learning.
- The majority of staff carefully considered the use of resources when creating the classroom and outdoor learning environments. These environments support children and young people to feel calm and interact with each other appropriately when learning. However, teachers have an overreliance on worksheets, repetitive group-based learning activities and children spend too much time undertaking unplanned activities. As a result, the majority of children and young people frequently disengage from learning activities and remove themselves from the activity where their learning needs are not met sufficiently well. Teachers need to ensure an improvement in children and young people's overall engagement. They should ensure that learning experiences are enjoyable, differentiated and well matched to the needs and interests of individual learners.

- The school community has worked very well in recent months to ensure children and young people have a welcoming school to attend. This approach is underpinned by personalised support to build trust and provide respectful and caring interactions. Staff have a strong commitment to children's rights and learners' participation. They recognise the importance of facilitated conversations for children and young people to express themselves. As a result of this strategy, staff have enabled a minority of children and young people to connect their rights, emotions, relationships, experiences and aspirations successfully through the 'Seamab Sea Changers'. Staff should now consider how to use the 'Seamab Sea Changers' further to improve all children and young people's motivation and aspirations to succeed with learning.
- All teachers use learning intentions and success criteria when delivering literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing activities. This consistent use of learning intentions outlines appropriately what the teacher expects children and young people to learn. While there is clarity in what teachers expect children to learn, only the majority of teachers and staff provide clear instructions about what children and young people have to do to be successful in their learning. There is a need to enable children and young people to understand better what knowledge, skills, attributes and capabilities they are working towards across all areas of the curriculum.
- Staff are at the very early stages of providing feedback and facilitating children's reflections on their learning. At the end of each lesson, there is no planned opportunities for children to evaluate the learning that's taken place. As a result, children are not clear about their progress and next steps. All teachers and staff need to develop a broader range of teaching approaches and develop the use of plenaries to support children's progress with learning. In addition, teachers should now develop their use of skilled questioning and encourage children and young people to develop critical thinking skills.
- Outdoor activities, planned by staff, provide children and young people with relevant opportunities to test and develop skills in less predictable contexts. In the majority of these outdoor sessions, staff observe children and young people closely to support them appropriately to promote independence and confidence. For example, when mounting a paddle board, staff offer children and young people well-timed interventions to explore techniques to mount the board in different depths of water or different weather conditions. Staff should now ensure that this practice is in place for all outdoor activities. In doing so, this will support children and young people to make progress in their learning.
- Senior leaders collect general information about a range of skills which children and young people are developing through outdoor learning activities. These records do not detail sufficiently well individual personal achievements nor the specific skills which children and young people are developing. Staff need to ensure that planned outdoor activities lead to improvements in children and young people's understanding of the skills they are developing during these activities. This should include staff helping learners to understand how their achievements contribute to their personal development.
- Staff's use of assessment evidence is not yet valid or reliable enough to report accurately on children and young people's progress. Teachers should ensure that approaches to assessment form an integral part of how they plan learning. Teachers need to build their confidence in making professional judgements on children and young people's progress and attainment. School leaders should develop arrangements for teachers to undertake moderation activity to help build a shared understanding of assessment. Additionally, school leaders should also seek opportunities for staff to work with teachers from other schools.

- Teachers' approaches to planning learning needs to be developed as a priority. The HoE is beginning to develop approaches to standardise planning for all areas of curriculum. There is a need to move this forward timeously to ensure that forward planning meets the needs of children and young people more effectively. There is a need for the ESM and staff to develop planning approaches to ensure progression in outdoor activities.
- The HoE has recently instated meetings with teachers to discuss children and young people's progress. There is need for teachers to improve how they gather information on children and young people's attainment across all curriculum areas to support these meetings better. It is important that teachers and staff develop consistent approaches to tracking and monitoring learners' progress in all curriculum areas and outdoor activities.
- Recently, the HoE has implemented individualised educational programmes (IEPs) to support bespoke planning for all children and young people. Teachers and staff are beginning to familiarise themselves with developing targets to reflect better children and young people's individual needs. As they continue to develop the use of IEPs, they need to consider how to measure the progress that children and young people make with their individualised targets.

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. Areas for development have been agreed with the school and the Board of Trustees.

3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

weak

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

- Staff are beginning to gather data on children and young people's attainment in literacy and numeracy. This is not yet sufficient evidence to give an indication of how well children and young people are attaining. Through observations of learning and reviewing learners' work it is evident that children and young people's attainment in literacy and numeracy requires improvement. Teachers need to take action to improve children and young people's progress and attainment in literacy and numeracy.

Literacy and English

- A minority of children and young people listen well for key information and can record the descriptions of what they have heard. In these classes, children and young people communicate well and contribute to class discussion with familiar adults and learners. Teachers need to ensure children and young people have enough opportunities to develop their listening and talking skills in a progressive way, taking account on what they can already do.
- A few children and young people read aloud with growing fluency to familiar adults. For these learners, this demonstrates progression in their confidence with reading. Almost all children and young people's reading is limited primarily to listening to texts being read to them or reading instructions related to learning tasks. A few children and young people use strategies effectively to read new or unfamiliar words. They can summarise the main points of text and predict the meaning of new words. Teachers need to improve children and young people's motivation for reading by providing planned, progressive opportunities for learners to read a variety of texts, which offer appropriate levels of challenge.
- Most children and young people write a narrow range of texts subject to their different abilities and ages. Most can form simple sentences and use punctuation and grammar appropriately. A few write paragraphs of text on subjects of interest to them. Children and young people's progress in writing is diminished substantially by the lack of challenge and progression in planned learning. Children and young people's writing does not build progressively on their prior learning. A few children and young people's writing has regressed in the last 12 months. Teachers need to develop progressive learning opportunities for children and young people to develop their writing skills.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Most children and young people can perform simple additions or subtractions. A few can calculate products using simple multiplications. A few children and young people can estimate the volume of liquid in a glass and use money to make simple purchases. Overall, the development of children and young people's number work lacks interest or relevance.

Teachers need to improve children and young people's abilities in numeracy and mathematics. Children and young people should be provided with more learning activities which enable them to apply their numeracy skills in real life contexts.

- A few children and young people can plot points on a simple grid or use directions to describe a short journey. A few can gather data and plot this in a simple chart. Teachers need to improve children and young people's skills in shape, position and movement and information handling.

Attainment over time

- The school holds very little data or information which evidences children and young people's attainment over time. There is not yet a rigorous process for tracking and monitoring learners' progress. The limited amount of evidence of children and young people's attainment is insufficient to draw meaningful conclusions as to how well their skills have developed during their time at the school. The HoE has recently introduced IEPs for each child and young person. IEPs do not yet provide information to support an evaluation of children and young people's progress against their personal targets. Staff need to continue to develop and implement approaches to tracking and monitoring to ensure they can assess children and young people's attainment and progress accurately.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Almost all children and young people enjoy school. They welcome the opportunities to play with their friends and the relationships that they are developing with staff. They are proud to share their learning with others through the school's weekly newspaper. This supports them to develop their confidence in identifying when they have been successful in.
- All children and young people have opportunities for personal achievements through frequent outdoor learning activities. These include mountain biking, paddle boarding and parkour. These activities help children and young people to develop and apply their skills in a range of new and unfamiliar contexts. As a result, most children and young people are building resilience and confidence when trying a range of new outdoor learning activities. Staff need to support children and young people to apply the skills they are learning outdoors across other areas of the curriculum. They should consider ways to recognise children and young people's personal achievements better, including, where appropriate, using accreditation.

Equity for all learners

- Caring relationships across the school support children and young people previously disengaged from education back into school. Educational psychology professionals and other health professionals support staff to understand each child or young person's individual circumstances and the challenges they face. This supports children and young people to feel they are treated fairly.
- Whilst staff know each child and young person well, there is no clear understanding across the school of how learning, support or interventions improve children and young people's outcomes. The school needs to develop a clear, strategic plan based on sound analysis of evidence, which focuses on raising attainment for all children and young people. Senior leaders need to develop ways of measuring the impact the school has in reducing inequity and disadvantage for children and young people.

Other relevant evidence

- Senior leaders should undertake a strategic review and update of the curriculum. In doing so, they should engage with teachers, educational support workers and outdoor specialists. Staff should work closely to ensure a shared understanding of the purpose of the curriculum at Seamab School. Staff should now build their capacity to meet the learning needs of all children and young people. They should establish high aspirations for what learning children and young people can access and plan to reduce any barriers to their learning.
- Following the recent appointment of the HoE, the CEO should work with senior leaders to develop further their roles and responsibilities. In doing so, they need to determine who will lead on improving approaches to quality improvement, increasing moderation activity and monitoring the impact of change. This will support a shared accountability for school performance and quality, including children and young people's progress and achievements.
- Senior leaders should progress with their plans to establish regular observations of quality of teaching. They should use the outcomes of observations to undertake professional dialogue with staff. This will support all staff to reflect critically on the quality of teaching and how this shapes children and young people's experiences. Senior leaders also need to develop a robust quality assurance programme. This will help them to evidence systematically the impact that teaching has on children and young people's learning and outcomes.

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.