

Summarised inspection findings

Cowie Primary School

Stirling Council

3 September 2019

Key contextual information

Cowie Primary School is situated in a former mining village approximately five miles from Stirling. The school roll is currently 152. The headteacher took up post on an acting basis in November 2018, having previously been the depute headteacher since August 2017. She secured the post permanently in January 2019. Staffing is now stable following a period of change and instability.

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

- Cowie Primary School has a welcoming, inclusive and caring ethos underpinned by a commitment to the principles of nurture and the school's recently refreshed vision, values and aims. The school's values of 'co-operation, aspiration, respect and empathy' (CARE) are evident throughout the school and in the positive relationships between pupils and all staff. The school's promotion of wellbeing is a strong feature. The health and wellbeing officer provides targeted support in order to ensure all learners can engage fully in their learning. The Cowie Cave and the Space Room provide calm and nurturing environments for children who require quiet time or emotional check-ins. This is having a positive impact on their readiness to learn.
- The headteacher has high aspirations for the whole school community. She has empowered skilfully all staff to take on leadership roles which they do with enthusiasm and a commitment to improving pedagogy and outcomes for learners. The school works effectively with a range of partners to enhance learning experiences and provide appropriate and timely support to children and families. In her relatively short time as headteacher, she has provided clear direction and shared expectations for learning and teaching. This is improving the quality and consistency of children's experiences.
- Parents and families are becoming involved increasingly in their child's learning. Children talk positively about opportunities to share their learning with their families both at home and during open sessions at school. The headteacher is keen to engage parents further in improving learning and raising aspirations. A few parents indicate that they would like to be more involved with the work of the parent council in supporting this.
- Across the school, children are polite and well-behaved. Almost all children engage fully in lessons, enjoying the range of learning on offer. In almost all classes, children can articulate what they are learning, the skills they are developing and their relevance to learning, life and work. A skills framework would support staff to plan progressively for skills development using Developing the Young Workforce and the Career Education Standards.
- In the best lessons observed, digital technology was used well to support learning. Children's use of digital technology to enhance learning should now be extended further across the school. Children have opportunities for collaborative working within and across classes. At P7, children are supportive buddies to P1. At P3, children lead learning in Makaton for all other

classes. The school now needs to build on existing good practice by enabling children across the school to lead and take responsibility for aspects of their learning.

- Children contribute to school life and the local community. The citizenship groups offer all children a voice in whole school developments, for example learning for sustainability and improving the school grounds. Older children develop leadership skills through the school house system and in running lunchtime clubs for younger children.
- Staff make good use of available space to create stimulating learning environments. For example, children value greatly the recently created school library. Events such as the official opening of the library by Sir Chris Hoy, give the children a sense of pride in their school and support the school's focus on creating a culture of reading. At P7, children run weekly story and snack sessions in the school library for younger children which are very well attended. Visits to the community library and sessions with published authors are helping children to develop a love of reading. Reading sessions which are held in the library over the summer support and sustain children's interest in reading during the school holidays.
- The school's creation of the Cowie Room enables children to develop their learning and skills in food, nutrition and cooking in a well-resourced space. Children use the school garden well to grow produce for 'Cowie Cooks' lessons. The school grounds are also utilised well for children's learning in science and numeracy. The headteacher and staff should now develop a whole school approach to outdoor learning to motivate and engage all children.
- Staff have established calm and purposeful environments for children's learning. Staff and children use wall displays well across the school to share and celebrate children's ideas, work and achievements. Visual prompts and strategies on display in all classes support effectively children's learning in literacy and numeracy. Teachers plan stimulating and relevant learning opportunities which make good use of their local context. For example, at P6 and P7, children read the novel 'Light on Dumyat' then climbed Dumyat Hill to gain an appreciation of the setting described in the book.
- In most classes, children plan aspects of interdisciplinary learning based on their interests and what they would like to learn. They would benefit from further opportunities for personalisation and choice across the curriculum. Children reflect well on their learning during 'Feedback Friday' sessions. They are developing the language of learning and talk with increasing confidence about themselves as learners. A few children felt that their work was quite easy. Across the school, staff now need to increase the level of challenge for a few children in order to develop higher-order thinking skills.
- Staff have a shared overview of assessment and the range of approaches used across the school. They use formative assessment to help inform their planning for next steps. Staff now need to plan more for children's progress in learning. At times, teachers' planning and delivery focused too much on tasks and not enough on children's learning. Standardised assessments are used well to inform teachers' professional judgement of children's learning. They now need to plan on a regular basis, assessments which enable children to apply their learning in a range of contexts.
- Parents report that they would like more information on how their child is assessed and how they can contribute to and support learning at home. As planned, senior school leaders should now work with parents to share information on the school's approach to learning, teaching and assessment.
- Teachers use national benchmarks with increasing confidence to support dialogue with colleagues when making professional judgements on children's' progress and achievement.

Their involvement in moderation activity within and beyond the school supports staff in reaching a shared understanding of expected standards. More opportunities for moderation across stages and the wider learning community will enhance staff's confidence further and help them to develop a progressive learner journey particularly at important times of transition.

- Teachers use local authority curricular pathways to plan children's learning and to help with breadth and progression. They now need to review the use of these to ensure a more appropriate pace of learning for all children. The headteacher is meticulous in tracking and monitoring children's learning. She has regular tracking and planning meetings with staff to discuss children's progress, including those facing potential barriers to learning. Where concerns are raised, appropriate strategies and interventions are agreed. These are closely monitored to ensure a positive impact. The pace of children's progress should now be tracked more closely.

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

Overall attainment in literacy and numeracy

- Overall, attainment in literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics is good. Most children are on track to achieve appropriate Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels by June 2019. A few children are making very good progress against their prior levels of attainment.

Listening and talking

- Progress in listening and talking is good. Across the school, most children share their ideas with their class, listen well to each other and respect the views of others. In group tasks, children take turns and can wait patiently to express their views. They need to develop further their skills in asking questions to clarify or extend their understanding.
- At the early stages of CfE, most children enjoy listening to stories and can share views, likes and dislikes with others including favourite characters and parts of stories.
- By the end of first level, most children demonstrate a range of important skills in listening and talking. They show increasing confidence and awareness of audience when engaging in conversations.
- At P7, children contribute a range of relevant ideas and opinions in group tasks and can support and challenge respectfully others' opinions and ideas during debates.

Reading

- At all stages, most children are making good progress in reading. Almost all children are motivated and enthusiastic in reading. Children across the school, would benefit from accessing a wider range of texts including newspapers, graphic novels and poetry to develop their skills and understanding of genre.
- At the early stages, most children are building their confidence in reading simple words. The majority can read and recognise descriptive words in a simple sentence.
- By the end of first level, most children can identify both the main ideas in a text and descriptive words and phrases, linking these to a character in a text.
- By the end of second level, most children can empathise with characters in feature novels. They identify relevant issues, the relative importance of the issues and predict what might happen next.

Writing

- Attainment in writing has improved in recent years and most children are making good progress. They write with increasing confidence and control. However, the quality of children's handwriting and presentation varies across the school.
- At the early level, most children are able to sequence a short story to demonstrate understanding and, with support, can create simple sentences.
- By the end of first level, most children can start sentences in a variety of ways, spell common words correctly and organise ideas in a logical sequence.
- By the end of second level, the majority of children write for a range of purposes including informal letters, information reports and fictional stories using complex sentence structures and vocabulary.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Children's attainment in numeracy and mathematics is good. They are developing a range of skills in numeracy and mathematics however they cannot always apply these skills in other areas of their learning.

Number, money and measure

- Progress in number money and measure is good. Across the school, most children are developing confidence and accuracy in mental agility and number processes. Most can talk confidently about the strategies they use to calculate answers. Across the school, children are less skilled in using problem solving strategies.
- At the early level, most children count and order numbers to 20 and in a few cases beyond. They recognise coins up to £2 and can read and display o' clock times.
- Across first level, most children can round numbers to the nearest 10 and 100 and have a clear understanding of the commutative law.
- By the end of second level, most children can work within a given budget and calculate profit and loss. They need to develop further their skills in financial management, in particular understanding the risks associated with using bank cards and making online purchases.

Shape, position and movement

- Most children are making good progress in shape, position and movement. Across the school, there is scope for children to apply skills they are developing in using compass points and giving directions in real life situations.
- At the early level, most children recognise and can describe 2D shapes and 3D objects. The majority can identify and create symmetrical pictures and patterns with one line of symmetry.
- At first level, most children know the four main compass points. They are less confident when using direction to describe position in practice, for example on a grid reference or in real life contexts. Children need to consolidate their skills in these areas.
- By the end of second level, most children use appropriate mathematical vocabulary to describe a range of angles. They are less familiar with complementary and supplementary angles.

Information handling

- Progress in information handling across the school is good. Children need to develop their skills in using digital technologies to further their progress in data and analysis across the school.
- By the end of early level, children can extract information from simple graphs and charts. They can match and sort items according to simple criteria such as colour and shape.
- By the end of first level, children can use tally marks when collecting data. They make appropriate use of mathematical vocabulary to describe the likelihood of events.
- At second level, most children can gather, organise and display data accurately. They are developing an understanding of the reliability of data by taking a range of factors into account.

Attainment over time

- Data provided by the school shows that children's attainment in literacy has improved since 2017/2018. Attainment in numeracy has improved across all levels since 2017, particularly at the first and second levels of CfE. A range of inspection activity indicates that teachers' professional judgements across literacy and numeracy are becoming increasingly accurate and reliable.
- In February 2019, the school put in place more robust approaches to tracking children's progress. As a result, the school has developed a clearer strategic overview of whether most children, including those who need additional support, are on track to achieve expected CfE levels across all curricular areas. The increased focus on children's progress and achievement has led to increased attainment over time.

Overall quality of learners' achievement

- At all stages, almost all children are developing their leadership and communication skills well through membership of a wide range of citizenship groups. For example, children promote the safety of peers as Junior Road Safety Officers and have developed an anti-bullying protocol for the school. Other groups raise funds for charities through organising events such as Red Nose Day. Cowie Carers engage regularly with local elderly people to support them and other groups are concerned with international fair trade and looking after the school grounds and facilities. All citizenship groups are led by children who develop their own action plans, minute meetings and produce displays of the impact their work.
- To ensure that children's achievements beyond the school are recognised and celebrated, house captains regularly collect 'achievement leaves' which they display in the corridor. A group of children track the wellbeing of all children across the school using wellbeing indicators. They display class responses in the shared house areas. As a result, all children are familiar with the language of wellbeing and can talk openly about their feelings and any anxieties that they experience.
- Most children participate in school activities at lunchtime or after school and the school now tracks effectively their engagement. Staff work closely with partners and as a result offer a range of opportunities which appeal to children's interests.
- Children are building their confidence through representing the school in local community events and national competitions. Recent whole school achievements include a Bronze Communication Environment Award for the inclusive, whole school approach to visual communication, the national School Reading Journey Award in the First Minister's Reading

Challenge, a Sport Scotland Silver Award for sports leadership achievements and an Arts Explore Award.

- The school should continue to record, track and monitor robustly children's personal achievements to support teachers to sign post children at risk of missing out. Staff should consider seeking accreditation where possible to recognise children's personal achievements.

Equity for all learners

- Data detailing the progression of children with potential barriers to their learning is carefully gathered and analysed by the headteacher. This supports teachers to ensure that all children access the curriculum. The headteacher recognises the need to work closely with all parents to continue to achieve the best possible outcomes for all children. She has introduced a range of opportunities to engage all parents in their child's learning. The school tracks the attainment of a range of groups who experience barriers to learning and provides a range of effective staged interventions which are helping to reduce these barriers. These include care experienced children and those with additional support needs. Almost all children in these groups are making good progress against their prior levels of attainment or against their own individual milestones. While the school can demonstrate the positive impact of targeted intervention on the attainment of these groups, it is too early to evaluate the impact of a recent initiative to improve children's overall attendance.

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.