

# Summarised inspection findings

**Small Isles Primary School**

Argyll and Bute Council

25 June 2019

## Key contextual information

Small Isles Primary School is situated on the Island of Jura. The school is led by a shared headship arrangement with Keills Primary School on the Island of Islay. The roll of the school is 19 children at the time of the inspection with four in the nursery class. All children are housed in one large classroom. The school is situated in extensive grounds across from the beach. A new principal teacher took up post in the week before the inspection.

### 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 has developed a welcoming, nurturing and supportive ethos across the school. She has established a culture where staff at all levels are engaged in the change process. When implementing change, the headteacher has had to take into consideration staffing difficulties and the very recent appointment of the new principal teacher (PT). With the leadership team now established and a committed staff team in place, there is scope for the pace of change to increase.
- Children, staff and parents were involved in reviewing the school vision and values in 2018. As a result, there is a shared understanding of the vision across the school. The values are visible in the interactions between children and adults. Regular opportunities are provided for children to explore the vision and values within lessons. Current plans to promote further the vision and values across the wider school community will provide a strong platform for underpinning all future development work. This will also help to embed the vision to provide excellent learning and teaching and to raise attainment more fully across the school. The headteacher and staff have already taken steps to review and evaluate the quality of learning and teaching. They have made an early start to ensuring children receive a broad and balanced curriculum. They have introduced progression pathways in most curricular areas to support a coherent progressive curricular experience for children. Staff have identified strategies to raise attainment and have begun to take part in local authority moderation activities to help ensure accurate judgements of achieving the level. Priorities to improve writing, develop reading skills and mental mathematics is beginning to show in children's increased attainment.
- The headteacher is committed to providing leadership opportunities at all levels. Almost all staff have a leadership role or additional responsibility within the school and take responsibility in the headteacher's absence due to the shared headship. The school has plans for the recently appointed PT to have a significant leadership role in enhancing the quality of learning and teaching, developing the curriculum and raising attainment. With this recent change in staff it would be a good time to increase opportunities for staff to lead on aspects of curricular development, perhaps in conjunction with their partner school. Developing leadership of all levels offers scope to increase the pace of change across the school. The school is now in a good place to become more aspirational about what children and the school can achieve.

- There is an effective Professional Review and Development (PRD) process within the school. It is clearly linked to the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) professional standards. Teachers' targets take account of school priorities and their individual development needs.
- The headteacher carries out a range of quality assurance activities well including formal and informal class visits which are focussed on the improvement priorities. Quality assurance is also provided appropriately through improvement visits by the local authority quality improvement officer. We have asked senior leaders to increase opportunities for self and peer assessments. The headteacher recognises the need for a more robust approach to self-evaluation. Staff have begun to use the quality indicators from 'How good is our school? 4th Edition' to evaluate the school. We ask that they continue to do this to ensure evaluations become robust over time. The headteacher has in place a clear improvement plan and progress on this is evaluated regularly over time. Parents and children views are sought on school improvement planning priorities.
- Due to the nature of the multi composite class, children naturally support each other. Children take on class duties regularly and look out for younger children. There is scope to be developing the leadership roles of children more fully across the school. There are a few pupil voice groups such as the Eco Committee. Children's views and opinions are sought as a whole school due to the small number of children rather than a pupil council of a few children. There is scope to develop children's skills in talking and presenting confidently within these groups. Early work has been done to develop their confidence and resilience-building. Staff should develop further these groups making more explicit links with national priorities such as 'Developing the Young Workforce' and 'Career Education Standard 3-18'.
- The school does not benefit from pupil equity funding allocation and parents feel strongly that children are not always provided with equity of opportunity due to their rural isolation. They feel that children are limited in taking part in sporting and swimming activities that other schools access due to the cost of the minibus and ferries. They feel strongly that their children are limited in wider achievement opportunities due to lack of funding.

## 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

- Overall, the quality of learning, teaching and assessment is good, however, the quality can be variable across the school. There is scope to provide opportunities to share good practice and develop a shared understanding of excellence in learning and teaching. In all classes, there is a calm, purposeful learning environment. Children value the importance of being a responsible member of the school community. All staff promote a very positive, caring ethos, which is evident in all classes. All children are respectful towards each other as they learn together in their classrooms.
- Almost all children are attentive and show good levels of concentration as they learn. Steps have been taken to increase the pace of learning within classes and to reduce the amount of time children are waiting to move onto the next meaningful task. In a few lessons, children have opportunities for choice within their learning. Recent development in the literacy and numeracy curriculum is beginning to have positive impact on learners' experiences in these areas. Teachers should continue to improve approaches to learning and agree on the features of high-quality learning experiences at Small Isles Primary School.
- In most classes, children make effective use of digital technologies to practise numeracy and literacy skills using online games. Children would benefit from more regular opportunities to develop digital literacy skills.
- Overall, staff provide clear explanations and ensure children understand the purpose of their learning. Teachers use questioning effectively and interact well with children to support and challenge thinking and build on prior learning. They should ensure planned learning experiences meet the needs of all learners. A few children across the school would benefit from a brisker pace and more challenge in their learning. Staff have made a good start to providing children with appropriate feedback and to review the overreliance on commercial resources. There is scope for children to have more opportunities to lead their own learning.
- Across the school, staff have made a good start to providing children with positive and encouraging oral and written feedback within learning, particularly in writing. Most children understand their next steps and are making good progress. Children are beginning to have opportunities to self and peer assess their writing. This is supporting children to reflect on and evaluate their writing. Teachers have worked collaboratively to improve assessment in writing. They use this to track progress and attainment and to identify next steps.
- Teachers are making use of a range of assessment data to support their professional judgements on achievement of Curriculum for Excellence levels and to measure progress in learning. Senior leaders recognise the need to streamline assessment processes and plan assessment in a more holistic way using national benchmarks. As they develop their approach

to assessment, they should align assessment more clearly to planned learning thus reducing the reliance on summative assessments so heavily.

- Further engagement in collaborative working and moderation will support improved outcomes for all children. Opportunities to work collaboratively using the moderation cycle, have scope to develop a shared understanding of progress and achievement of a level across the curriculum.
- Through termly learning and teaching consultations senior leaders and teachers discuss the progress in learning and attainment for individual learners. There is a need to establish a clearer picture of the gaps in learning for a few children to ensure they can progress at a faster rate. Teachers use a range of long and short-term planning approaches and they report that they are now making better use of progression pathways to support learning.
- Children who demonstrate gaps in their learning have their needs identified and interventions put in place to enable them to make appropriate progress. There remains scope to identify gaps in learning with more rigour.

## 2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- The headteacher has recently introduced progression frameworks for most curricular areas to ensure progression and continuity in learning. There is a need to ensure faster pace of learning through all levels of the curriculum for children.
- Steps have been taken to ensure progression in interdisciplinary learning. The headteacher has provided clear leadership and direction to ensure that all children receive a broad range of experiences. Steps should now be taken to ensure that children receive experiences appropriate to their age and stage of development. Children receive two hours of quality physical education (PE) each week and receive good support from a visiting music specialist. At present, children develop their skills well in French across the school. Children were developing their skills in Gaelic but this was not taking place at the time of the inspection due to staff absence. This was to resume in the new school year.
- Parents and the community are very supportive of the school and children benefit from the expertise of many adults on the island who give their time to support children's learning. Children are very involved in contributing to the community action plan for the future of Jura. They are surrounded by a rich learning environment which we encourage the school to make much more of as a context for learning.
- Transitions are well considered and attempts are made to develop children's relationships with their partner school in preparation for secondary. The school takes part in a range of inter school sporting and cultural activities. For example, they took part in the Islay Mod and achieved success in the singing competition. The school faces significant challenges taking part in these activities due to the cost of the Ferry and buses.

## 2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- Staff have a very positive relationship with parents who feel they are part of the school and that the school is at the heart of the community. The school is well supported by parents and the wider community. A range of parents use their expertise to support the learning in school. Children benefit recently from the expertise from a parent working with the Royal Society for the protection of Birds (RSPB) and an expert on recycling and as a result could speak very confidently about both. Staff arrange helpful meetings with parents to explain new approaches such as the new approach to teaching phonics. Children set targets for their learning and log these in their achievement folders. We ask that these targets be more clearly linked to the benchmarks and to inform parents more fully in setting children's targets.
- Parents are very committed to the school and the active Parent Forum raise substantial amounts of money which help enhance children's experience in school.

## 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 maximize their successes and achievements. The themes are:

- wellbeing
- fulfilment of statutory duties
- inclusion and equality

- There is a strong ethos of care and support across the school. Children take pride in attending Small Isles Primary School and show respect for adults, peers and the wider school community. Relationships between staff, children and their peers are very positive and all children say they enjoy their learning. All staff and partners are proactive in promoting positive relationships. Together, they create a climate where all children feel safe and secure.
- All staff are sensitive and responsive to children's wellbeing needs. Children feel listened to and are confident that their concerns are addressed. The majority know the wellbeing indicators and older children can speak well about aspects of their life that contribute to their wellbeing. The wellbeing indicators are displayed prominently throughout the school. However, more needs done to ensure children develop language and confidence to evaluate their own wellbeing and are able to discuss their feelings or problems with a trusted adult. There is a need to review the health and wellbeing pathway to ensure it is more coherent and progressive across the school. In doing this, improve the approach to teaching sexual health and relationships to ensure knowledge and understanding in this area is built up over time and parents are consulted about this area of work. All children who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire agreed that the school helped them feel safe. Most children who responded to pre-inspection questionnaires agreed the school helps them to lead a healthy lifestyle and have opportunities for regular exercise. Children know about healthy choices, and are encouraged to choose fruit and salad at lunch time. They could confidently talk about how their views are taken into account and are leading to positive change within the school. Engaging children in learning linked to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child would further support this work.
- Across the school, all staff are aware of their responsibilities in relation to 'Getting it right for every child'. They now need to ensure that there is more robust assessment of needs on which to plan interventions.
- Promoting positive behaviour is embedded in day-to-day life at Small Isles Primary School. There is a respectful culture and ethos where promoting positive relationships and behaviour is highly evident.
- The school recognises that celebrating achievements is an important aspect of developing children's emotional wellbeing. Celebrations of children's individual achievements from both within and outwith school are given a high profile through wall displays and their celebration folder. There is a need to now make children more aware of attributes and capabilities developed within these. Staff should track children's wider achievements and involve children in planning for wider achievements.

- All staff within the school undertake annual Child Protection training. Confidential information on children is held securely.
- Staff undertake professional learning, which supports them to understand children's individual needs. Recently, staff identified the need to increase children's resilience. They have accessed professional learning linked to resilience and have implemented a resource to support this across the school. This is beginning to have a positive impact on children.
- The school ensures that Religious Observance opportunities are planned and delivered across the year. Through religious and moral education and health and wellbeing, children are provided with opportunities to explore a range of beliefs and to challenge racism. Senior leaders now need to ensure that the curriculum offers sufficient opportunity for children to develop their awareness of diversity and protected characteristics in a planned and progressive way, across the four contexts for learning.

### 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

- The school gathers data from standardised assessment, in class assessments and data from interventions for literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics. To raise attainment further, teachers now need to make more effective use of benchmarks to track the progress of individual children across the curriculum. Continued engagement in moderation activities would help teachers judge accurately when children achieve a level. The headteacher has termly discussions with staff, which are based on evidence of progress, to identify children's appropriate next steps in learning. The school has a clear approach to tracking and monitoring attainment across literacy and numeracy. The clear focus on raising attainment in literacy and numeracy is having a positive impact on attainment. As identified by the school a few children could be achieving more.
- Overall attainment in literacy and numeracy is good. The number of children in cohorts varies and is relatively small. Therefore, overall statements have been made about progression to ensure anonymity about individuals. Over the past year, there has been an improvement in the school's strategy to raise attainment. The introduction of progression frameworks, and a quality assurance calendar, are helping teachers gain confidence in their professional judgement of achievement of a level. Children who have gaps in their learning are beginning to make improved progress as a result of the targeted approach.

#### Attainment in literacy and English Talking and Listening

- Across the school, children are respectful in situations in which they are talking to an adult, to each other and in discussions. Across the school, children work well in mixed age groups, take turns and engage in group discussions encouraging others to participate. Across levels, children should more regularly be enabled to contribute their views, ideas, information and opinions through teachers' more open-ended questioning. A concentrated effort on formally teaching the skills of talking and listening would help children develop their confidence and be able to articulate the skills involved in a range of talking and presenting situations.
- Across all levels, most children make good progress in reading. Recent interventions have been put in place which have raised attainment at the early level in literacy. Children are making good progress in developing their understanding of phonics and use them well to decode unfamiliar words. Most children enjoy reading and read regularly. All children access the class library and the mobile library. Children choose books and can give reasons for their choice of books. Older children read challenging books by a wide range of authors for pleasure. Children at the first and second level can read with fluency appropriate to their age and stage. There is scope to ensure children use their knowledge of what they learn about authors' craft in their writing.

- Staff across the school have had a focus on improving the standard of presentation in children's work. Since August staff have had a clear focus on improving the standard of writing across the school. This is beginning to have an impact on attainment across the school. Most children make good progress in writing. All children are able to write one or two sentences independently with support as they reach the end of the early level. There is scope to provide support for young children across the early level to write, which encourages them to sentence build for themselves and to have a go at writing familiar words regularly from memory. Across the school, most children are making good progress in writing. They are able to write in a range of genre. Children across the school need to develop their skills in writing at length. Children show a good understanding of punctuation and features of language appropriate to their age and stage.

### **Attainment in numeracy and mathematics**

- Overall, attainment in number, money and measurement is good. A few children are making very good progress. A renewed focus on the development of oral and mental mathematics is having a positive impact on children's attainment. Most children at the early level are developing confidence in recognising and writing numbers. Most children can order numbers and identify the previous or next number. At first level, most children are familiar with a range of strategies for adding and subtracting two digit numbers mentally. Most children working towards the first level can work out the answers to the times tables below five. They need to work on their speed and fluency of answers. Most children can tell the time using analogue and digital 12-hour clocks. At second level, the majority of children are confident with basic number operations involving two- and three-digit numbers. The majority are confident with times tables up to ten. They understand place value up to seven-figure numbers. Most children can calculate time intervals. They measure local journeys to develop their understanding of durations. Children are beginning to have their learning in mathematics and numeracy linked to real life situations.
- Overall, attainment in shape, position and movement is good. At early level, most children can identify simple 2D shapes and 3D objects. Most children at first level are confident in identifying the characteristics of 2D shapes. Most children working towards the second level are confident in explaining the appropriate qualities of 2D shapes and 3D objects. Children need to develop their understanding of angles and the properties of different triangles.
- Children at early level can collect and organise objects for a specific purpose to demonstrate their skills in handling information. Children at first level can collect and represent information using bar graphs. Most children working on the first and second level could describe a range of graphs, and could explain their uses and advantages.
- Overall, children's progress in measurement, problem solving and probability and chance needs to be improved.

### **Quality of learner's achievements**

- Each child has a celebration folder which includes helpful information regarding wider achievements. Children have suitable responsibility for identifying achievements for this folder from in and out with school. As identified, early advice has been given to make children more aware of the skills and attributes within these wider achievements. There is scope to track children's wider achievements more fully and link it to developing skills for learning life and work.

### **Attainment over time**

- The headteacher has introduced a range of standardised and summative tests to add rigour to the assessment process. She has developed a helpful tracking system which is used with staff to plan learning and monitor children's progress. Staff are beginning to use the benchmarks

and clearer progression pathways to help with their accuracy of judgements. As a result of these systems in place, staff have a clearer picture of children's progress over time. Overall children's attainment is improving over time. The school have identified a few children who are exceeding expectations and are capable of more challenging work.

### **Equity for all learners**

- Across the school, all children are treated equally and with respect. Staff know their family circumstances, needs, personalities and interests well. Relationships with families are very good and children are well supported emotionally within school. Given the small numbers in the school, all children feel they are given an equal voice in the school and feel confident to raise any concerns with a known adult. The school does not benefit from pupil equity funding but does target funding according to the greatest need. Parents have concerns over the inequity surrounding their children's access to inter school competitions, swimming etc. due to the prohibitive cost of the bus and ferry.

## Choice of QI: 1.5 Management of resources to promote equity

- Management of finance for learning
  - Management of resources and environment for learning
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- The school and nursery follows appropriate governance provided by the local education authority surrounding school finances. They have used their limited resources appropriately and have not benefitted from additional funding due to deprivation. They follow the local authority guidance based on best value and explore a range of procurement options to ensure they maximise their resources.
  - Staff across the school and nursery are aware of the financial resources available and are involved in major spending decisions. Staff are involved in setting priorities for expenditure and monitor the impact of resources on outcomes for children to ensure best value. The headteacher advised us that school and nursery budgets are monitored in line with the local authority procedures. Staffing resource is used well to support children effectively. Additional expertise is supplemented by funding from the parent forum.
  - As identified by the school, there is a need to plan for long term investment in digital hardware and expertise to support children's digital learning. Take steps as identified by the headteacher to amend the improvement plan to include costings.

## 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.