

Summarised inspection findings

Brora Primary School

The Highland Council

27 May 2025

Key contextual information

Brora Primary School is a non-denominational school serving the village of Brora and the surrounding area. There are 94 children across five composite classes. The senior leadership team consists of a headteacher and a principal teacher. The headteacher has been in post for two years and the principal teacher for one year. Almost all children live in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) data zones four to six. Across the school, 45% of children require additional support with their learning and 18% of children are in receipt of free school meals.

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

- The headteacher and staff work together effectively to create a positive, welcoming and nurturing ethos for children and families. They understand the school community and know children very well as individuals. Children demonstrate proudly the agreed school values which encourage them to build friendships, be respectful, open minded, responsible and always kind. Staff and children work collaboratively to promote and embed children's rights through class charters and national accreditation.
- All staff build very positive relationships with children. As a result, almost all children display high standards of positive behaviour consistently across the school. Children listen to the views of others respectfully and complete tasks well as individuals, in groups and in pairs. They are polite and supportive and co-operate effectively when working together.
- The headteacher and staff have worked together well to review and improve the quality of learning and teaching across the school. As a next step, staff should now collate all agreed approaches into a learning and teaching policy. This will provide greater clarity of their shared understanding of highly effective learning and teaching. Going forward, teachers should focus on ensuring all planned learning meets the needs of all children. This should ensure that all children experience learning set at the right level of difficulty and make increased progress.
- Teachers have created well organised and welcoming learning environments. The school library is a well-resourced and attractive space which is used by children to develop reading for enjoyment and support research skills. Children benefit from regular access to learn outdoors in the school grounds, a local forest and beach. Staff use these spaces well to promote children's curiosity and creativity. For example, children enjoyed participating in a challenge set by a local charity where they collected sea glass to produce recycled pieces of art.

- In most lessons, teachers share the purpose of learning with children effectively. Most teachers provide children with clear explanations and instructions and highlight steps children need to take to be successful. Across the school, all teachers should involve children more fully in creating steps to success to achieve the planned learning. This will support children to identify better the skills they are developing and understand how to improve.
- In all lessons, teachers use questioning effectively to check children's understanding. In a few lessons, teachers' questioning encourages children to explain their thinking and make connections across learning. The headteacher should now share this effective practice with all staff to develop their questioning skills further and promote children's higher order thinking skills.
- In most lessons, teachers use formative assessment strategies appropriately to support children's learning and to provide verbal feedback. Almost all teachers provide meaningful feedback in writing activities which helps children to understand their next steps. Staff need to now provide meaningful feedback across other curricular areas. In doing so, teachers should ensure that feedback links closely to the purpose of the lesson and how children can be successful.
- Most teachers use digital technology, such as interactive whiteboards well to support whole class lessons. Children regularly access digital devices to support and enhance learning independently. For example, they play games to consolidate their learning, learn about coding and programming, and research and present information using multimedia. Older children who act as 'digital buddies' help younger children develop their digital skills well. Senior leaders have recently introduced the local authority's digital learning pathway to teachers. Teachers should continue to use this to support their planning and ensure children develop digital skills progressively across all stages.
- Staff at early level are beginning to provide a range of learning through play experiences for children. These are linked well to children's learning in literacy and numeracy. Senior leaders, teaching and nursery staff should continue to work together to engage with national practice guidance and develop a shared understanding of play pedagogy. This should focus on encouraging children to become more independent and support a better balance of child-led and adult-initiated learning.
- Teachers have worked together successfully to review their approaches to planning. All teachers are beginning to use agreed formats alongside progression pathways to plan appropriately across different timescales. The headteacher supports staff to develop and moderate planning approaches collegiately. This is providing a greater level of consistency across classes and stages in the school. Teachers create a termly overview which they share with parents which helps them understand their child's learning journey.
- The headteacher has created an assessment calendar to outline clearly when key summative and standardised assessments will take place across the school year. Teachers are increasing their confidence in interpreting assessment data gathered. They use the outcome of assessments well to inform professional judgements about children's achievement and to track progress in learning. As planned, teachers should continue to engage in ongoing moderation activity both within and beyond the school. As part of this, they should focus on other aspects

of the moderation cycle to enhance further their shared understanding of high-quality learning, teaching and assessment.

- Almost all teachers have undertaken professional learning to create high quality assessments. These assessments, based on learning across the curriculum, allow children to demonstrate their knowledge and skills in new and unfamiliar contexts. As a next step, teachers need to ensure that planning is fully evaluated and informed better by assessment information they gather. This will help ensure teachers plan lessons that build on prior learning.
- The headteacher meets termly with teaching and support staff to discuss children's progress. This session, teachers are using a new school tracking system which is supporting them to monitor children's progress more effectively and identify gaps in learning. They use this process well to plan appropriate supports for those children who require them. All support staff collaborate closely with teachers to deliver additional help to children in all classes. They facilitate targeted interventions effectively for individuals and small groups of children such as, paired reading. Moving forward, staff need to now measure the impact and effectiveness of all interventions regularly to ensure the best outcomes for children. They should continue to develop the use of digital technology to provide additional support for children who require support with their learning.

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 education authority.

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

Attainment in literacy and numeracy

- Overall, children's attainment in literacy and numeracy is good. In reading, most children achieve nationally expected levels across all stages. In listening and talking, almost all children in P1, P4 and P7 achieve nationally expected levels. In writing, most children in P1 and P7 and a majority in P4 achieve expected levels. In numeracy, almost all children in P1 and P4 and most children in P7 achieve nationally expected levels.
- Most children who require additional support with their learning make good progress towards their individual learning targets.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Across all stages, most children make good progress in literacy and English.

Listening and talking

- At early level, most children use appropriate body language, such as eye contact, to sustain discussions during play experiences. They talk clearly to one another to share their ideas and feelings. A few children need to learn to take turns when engaging in discussions with others in a group. At first level, most children talk confidently and share their opinions well as they discuss various topics. They ask and respond to simple questions during discussions with their peers and understand clearly the difference between fact and opinion statements. A few children need to be reminded not to talk over others when they are sharing their views. At second level, most children engage enthusiastically in discussions, sharing their ideas and views well. They build confidently on the contributions of others by asking relevant questions and clarifying their views. Most children would benefit from developing further their skills in debating and presenting their learning and ideas to others.

Reading

- At early level, most children use their knowledge of sounds and patterns to read simple words. They use context clues when reading, such as illustrations, to support their understanding. They engage well when texts are read to them and answer questions relating to the text such as, identifying the key characters. At first level, most children talk confidently about their favourite authors and about reading a variety of interesting texts from the school library. They read aloud with fluency and expression to engage the listener. At second level, most children demonstrate an understanding of different genres and author's styles and relate this to their personal preferences. Most children read unfamiliar texts confidently using their knowledge of punctuation to support this well. They answer effectively a variety of types of questions to demonstrate their understanding of texts read. Most children need to develop their skills further in note taking. A minority of children at first and second level would benefit from revisiting the key features of fiction and non-fiction books, such as glossary and index.

Writing

- Most children at early level form letters correctly when writing. They use their knowledge of sounds and blends effectively to write simple words. At first level, most children use their knowledge of sounds and patterns well to spell unfamiliar words. Most children write using punctuation accurately. At second level, most children use supports, such as dictionaries, well to assist them in spelling unfamiliar words. A majority of children describe complex punctuation and use this to support their writing. They use conjunctions well to vary the lengths of their sentences. At both first and second level, most children are aware of a few different styles of writing. However, a few children need further experience in learning the structure and format of a wider variety of genres.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, most children make good progress in numeracy and mathematics. Teachers should continue to plan to ensure all children regularly revisit concepts and apply knowledge and skills in a range of contexts.

Number, money and measure

- Most children at early level, count within 20 confidently and add and subtract within 10 using concrete materials or pictures. Most children identify different coins to £2 through relevant play contexts. At first level, most children have a good understanding of place value to 1,000 and rounding to the nearest 10 and 100. A majority of children are confident in addition and subtraction calculations but are less confident in using division skills to find a fraction of a whole number. At second level, most children read, write and order numbers up to 1,000,000 with accuracy. Almost all children solve simple algebraic equations confidently. Most children read and record time in both 12 hour and 24-hour notation and convert between these. A majority of children would benefit from opportunities to calculate durations of time, including bridging across hours.

Shape, position and movement

- At early level, most children confidently name two-dimensional shapes. Most children identify symmetry in simple pictures and shapes. They are less confident in completing symmetrical patterns. At the first level, a majority of children name three-dimensional objects and identify their properties. At second level, a majority of children link the eight compass points and angles to describe directions. They require more experience in identifying three-dimensional objects from their nets. Overall, children working at first and second levels should regularly revisit concepts to strengthen their understanding of shape and their properties.

Information handling

- At early level, most children confidently sort items according to shape, size and colour. At first level, almost all children extract information from charts and pictographs with accuracy. Most children are less confident interpreting Venn diagrams. At second level, most children display and interpret data confidently from a range of graphs. A few children must ensure greater accuracy when displaying data in bar graphs and histograms. Children at both first and second levels would benefit from using digital technologies to develop further their data handling skills.

Attainment over time

- Attendance over recent years has remained positive. Attendance is currently 92% which is in line with the national average. The headteacher tracks the attendance of all children every four weeks and is aware of all reasons for absence. Working closely with parents, the headteacher acts promptly, following local authority guidance, to address any issues relating to low attendance. There are no children on part time timetables.

- Over recent years, attainment has improved in all aspects of literacy and numeracy across all stages. Staff use newly developed approaches well to track children's progress and achievement over time. These approaches support staff to review and discuss effectively all data available as they monitor the progress children make in their learning. The headteacher has gathered all historical data and included this into the school's new tracking system. As a result, staff have clear information to support their ongoing assessment of children's progress over time. The headteacher and staff track the progress of individual and cohorts of children. Staff currently track children's attainment and progress in literacy and numeracy. Staff should now track progress across other curricular areas.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Staff encourage parents to share their child's achievements with them so that they can be celebrated in school. Staff ensure that children's successes, both in and out of school, are celebrated in classes, at assemblies and through 'WOW' wall displays. Children are proud to share their achievements, and most children state they have an adult in school that they can share their wider achievements with.
- All children have access to a range of activities such as country dancing and basketball. Using established community links, staff should continue to identify opportunities to ensure that all children have access to wider opportunities. The headteacher and staff should continue as planned, with the ongoing development of wider achievement tracking. As part of this, staff should support children to identify independently the skills they are developing through their experiences both in school and out with. This will support children to link their achievements to skills for learning, life and work.
- Children develop skills as responsible citizens through fundraising and community events. They talk positively about experiences that are offered by the school. In addition, children develop leadership skills further through the pupil council, rights respecting schools' group, eco group, digital buddies and work with local charities.

Equity for all learners

- The headteacher and staff have a clear understanding of the social and economic background of the school community. They are sensitive to the increasing financial pressures on families. Families benefit from access to a food bank on the school campus housed in the local community centre. The headteacher embraces a partnership with a local development trust to provide meal bags for all children during the holidays. Staff use funding appropriately to offset the cost of a variety of activities to ensure no child is at risk of missing out.
- The headteacher uses data effectively to identify children who experience barriers to learning to ensure equity for all. This includes children who require additional support with their learning or are impacted due to financial constraints. The headteacher consults with the Parent Council and staff on how best to invest Pupil Equity Funding (PEF). PEF is used well to fund an additional member of support staff to provide interventions to support identified gaps in children's learning. The headteacher and staff should now evaluate more effectively the impact of all interventions funded by PEF. This will support them to measure better the attainment gap between different groups of learners.

Other relevant evidence

- All children from P1 to P7 learn French and older children are beginning to learn Spanish. As planned, the headteacher should review their current practice to ensure all children receive their entitlement to learning as part of the 1+2 modern languages programme.
- All classes receive two hours of high-quality physical education lessons weekly.
- All teachers use the local authority's progression pathway to support the teaching of religious and moral education. Staff have created links with the local faith leaders to support learning about Christianity. In addition, children talk positively about their growing knowledge of other world religions.

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.