

# Summarised inspection findings

**Stratherrick Primary School**

The Highland Council

26 March 2024

## Key contextual information

Stratherrick Primary School is located in a remote rural setting serving the local community of Gorthleck village and beyond. The school catchment extends to Knockie Lodge (Whitebridge) in the south to Torness in the north. At the time of the inspection there were 15 children at the primary stages and eight in the nursery. There is a teaching headteacher and a part-time teacher. The school also has a nursery with two early years practitioners. The headteacher has responsibility for leadership and management of the nursery and school. There are two support assistants, a cook and a part-time administrator.

The headteacher has very recently returned to the school following a secondment as a cluster headteacher elsewhere in Highland Council. The classroom teacher and one early years practitioner are new to the school from January 2024. There have been a significant number of changes within the teaching team in recent months.

### 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

- Children are very keen to learn and want to do their best. They engage well as they learn together in their classroom. Children are respectful towards each other and show genuine interest in each other's contributions. They work and play well together and as individuals through the school day. Children enjoy having different learning spaces to work, relax and socialise. Adults care sensitively and respectfully for children. They are very attentive to their emotional and social needs. As a result, the school is calm and has a strong family ethos.
- Overall, children understand the purpose of their learning. They discuss with teaching staff what they are learning about, their ideas and what is expected of them. Children enjoy tasks and activities which enable them to contribute their own thinking. They are creative and imaginative. However, children spend too long completing worksheet and workbook activities. They practise basic skills, but these pieces of work often inhibit their creativity and slow their progress. Children are not always able to transfer the skills they practise in these activities into other aspects of their learning. Children are capable of being included in planning and leading their own learning. They would benefit from devising work plans with their teachers which will better meet their learning needs and offer the right levels of challenge. Children use digital devices confidently to find information. They could make more use of them to extend their skills and work independently.
- Children have experienced a number of changes to their teachers in recent months. As a result, they have faced a range of approaches and expectations. Teachers and support staff promote the school values through encouraging children to try their best and be responsible. They share the purpose of lessons and encourage children to talk about what is expected of them. Teachers are beginning to incorporate children's ideas into some aspects of their

learning. However, evidence in children's jotters over time shows this has not been a consistent feature. At times, teachers expect children to complete their tasks promptly. At other times, children spend too long working on tasks they do not fully understand the value of. Children show high levels of respect for the adults who work alongside them and will persevere even when they find things tricky. Support staff are responsive and assist children well to complete their tasks. Teachers need to use meaningful, real-life contexts more in their teaching to inspire children, offer them greater challenge and enable them to learn in different ways. This would help reduce staff's reliance on worksheets and workbooks.

- Children have access to resources, indoors and outdoors, which they can play with. They are good at using their imaginations to invent their own play. Adults value children's play and encourage them. The headteacher and teachers have not yet developed learning through play using national guidance.
- Teachers provide children with tasks which match their stage. At times these are differentiated to meet children's learning needs through published resources. Children have a range of individual learning needs, however these are not always met effectively enough through the lessons and activities teachers plan. The headteacher and teachers need to ensure that children's individualised learning plans are kept up-to-date and acted upon. This includes incorporating advice from outside professionals. This will help ensure children's needs are met more effectively so they can make better progress. Support assistants work hard to help progress children's learning and children would benefit from more effective collaboration between teachers and support staff.
- Children receive encouraging oral feedback from adults about their work throughout their day. Children also praise each other readily. The changes in teaching staff have resulted in an inconsistent approach to giving children specific focused feedback on their work. Children are not able to talk fully about their own strengths and areas for improvement. They are not yet using personalised targets to help them learn independently. Teachers need to guide children in understanding how they can meaningfully progress their own learning and share this information with their families to promote greater partnership.
- The headteacher and teachers have used a variety of summative and standardised assessments to help them measure children's progress in literacy and numeracy over time. These are mainly from published materials. Children are not experienced in taking part in assessment activities that have been designed based on their interests or real-life contexts. Teachers keep assessment jotters and samples of children's work for literacy and numeracy. These show that the pace of children's progress and the outcomes children have achieved are variable. Teachers need to enable children to demonstrate their capabilities and the knowledge and skills they have achieved through a wider range of contexts. This will help them have more reliable evidence to report on children's progress and attainment at all stages. The headteacher and teachers have taken part in moderation activities alongside local schools to support their professional development. As planned, the headteacher should re-establish this work with staff.
- The headteacher and teachers make appropriate use of Curriculum for Excellence experiences and outcomes and associated guidance to plan learning. They incorporate wider achievement for children and use the natural environment surrounding the school to enhance learning. Teachers keep a record of the lessons and activities children take part in. They also note how children are progressing in aspects of literacy and numeracy. The headteacher and teachers do not yet have comprehensive data of children's progress over time. This makes it challenging to monitor children's progress, particularly when there are changes in staffing. The headteacher and teachers need to have a clearer understanding of children's progress. This

will enable them to plan more accurately to ensure all children are challenged appropriately and make the best possible progress.

## 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 that need to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

## 3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

satisfactory

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

- At the time of the inspection, the school roll comprised of a small number of children in P1, P2, P3, P4, P5 and P7. As a result, attainment and progress will be expressed in 'overall' statements, rather than for specific year groups or Curriculum for Excellence levels to protect the anonymity of children.
- The headteacher and teachers use national and published standardised assessments to support their professional judgement of children's progress and attainment at early, first and second levels of Curriculum for Excellence. These show that most children attain national standards. Teachers do not have a sufficient breadth of evidence of children's work over time that demonstrates children's knowledge and skills in creative and open-ended tasks. Children, including those who need extra help in their learning, could be making better progress.

### Attainment in literacy and English

- Across the school, children are making satisfactory progress in listening and talking, reading and writing. Children attain well in relation to national standards for their age and stage, but their rate of progress could be much better.

### Listening and talking

- Children at all stages are articulate and enjoy social conversation with their peers. They are keen to share their interests and ideas. Children listen well to their teachers when the task interests them. They become distracted when the task or activity is not meeting their learning needs. Older children interact thoughtfully with younger children. All children need more experience in deepening their skills at their own level.

### Reading

- Most children show a keen interest in books. They talk about the types of books they enjoy, particularly those they read at home. Children are building fluency and expression as they move through the school. A few children need support to continue to practise letter sounds and blends. Children need to continue to build their confidence and read a wider range of texts which interest them. They describe characters and the main ideas in books they read. Children should be encouraged to make use of the wide range of texts in the school library to enhance their skills further.

### Writing

- Children's progress in writing is too variable. They are not experienced in writing at length about topics that interest them. Children write on worksheets or complete textbook tasks too often. This is slowing their progress overall. Children write in sentences with appropriate

spelling and punctuation in relation to their stage at first and second levels. They write instructions, letters and poetry. A few children use a dictionary to help them spell or find the meaning of unfamiliar words.

### **Numeracy and mathematics**

- Children across the school are making satisfactory progress in numeracy and mathematics. Children attain well in relation to national standards for their age and stage. However, their knowledge and understanding of concepts could be more secure. Children are not experienced in using their skills in real-life contexts. This is slowing their progress.

### **Number, money and measure**

- The majority of children use their knowledge of number bonds to complete mental calculations confidently. They are less familiar with using different strategies to complete the same calculation. Younger children need more practice in completing calculations accurately on paper. Children identify coins appropriate to their stage and solve simple money problems. They need more practise in working with decimals and fractions to help them understand the links between them. Children know how to use units of measure. They need more regular experience with real-life contexts to ensure they use their skills consistently through their learning.

### **Shape, position and movement**

- Children identify common two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects appropriate to their stage. They use appropriate mathematical language to describe their properties. Children identify points on a compass. They are less familiar with angles. Overall, children need more regular experience in the concepts of shape, position and movement. There are too few examples of children practising these skills in real-life contexts.

### **Information handling**

- Almost all children recognise bar graphs and charts. Most children confidently ask and answer questions about the information they contain. They collect their own information and present it in graph form. Older children are not experienced in handling and presenting more complex information. Children would benefit from using their digital skills to present information.

### **Attainment over time**

- The headteacher has attainment data over a number of years which shows most children attain national standards at key points in the primary school. The very small numbers of children at each stage make it challenging to identify any patterns and trends. Teachers are not yet tracking children's progress systematically enough. They are not able to measure and record in detail the gains children make as they progress through the school from nursery to P7. The headteacher should develop a systematic approach to tracking children's progress over time. This would help support teachers to meet children's learning needs more effectively and act when children need extra help or greater challenge.

### **Overall quality of learners' achievements**

- Children are energetic, enthusiastic and talented. They like to bring their interests and skills from home into school to share with their friends. Children have successfully achieved an Eco-Schools Scotland Green Flag. They grow and harvest their own produce which is used by the school cook at lunchtime. Children take part in annual fun runs to raise money for local charities. As planned, the headteacher and teachers need to explore in more depth the skills children are learning and track these carefully to ensure all children make progress.

- Parents of children at the school are members of the Parent Council. They link closely with the headteacher and the Stratherrick and Foyers Community Trust. The Parent Council is very successful in raising considerable additional funding through the Community Trust and through their own fundraising. These monies are used carefully to enhance all children's achievements in the nursery and school. Children have taken part in bushcraft activities locally. They have travelled to Inverness for swimming lessons. Children also approach the Parent Council with their own ideas, and they recently took delivery of materials to enhance their outdoor learning experiences.

### **Equity for all learners**

- The headteacher and support staff know families very well. They are sensitive and will support families where required. The Parent Council provide additional funds for the headteacher to use at his discretion. This helps ensure no child misses out. The headteacher and staff are proactive in ensuring the school maintains a high level of attendance.
- The headteacher needs to review the approaches to support for learning for a few children. All children should have up-to-date plans which are acted upon. There is scope to review the teaching arrangements for some children.
- The Parent Council are not yet aware of Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) and how it is used in school. The headteacher has plans to address this. The school receives a small amount of funding. The headteacher has used this to purchase additional resources to support children's progress in writing across the school. As yet, there is no information about the impact of this work.



## Other relevant evidence

- Children take part in two hours of physical education each week. One session is provided by an outside specialist which builds on children's skills.
- Children have access to a wide range of books. Teachers have purchased additional books to support novel studies. These have yet to be used. Children do not routinely take books home from school and there is no local library. They do like to bring favourite books from home to share with their friends.

## 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.