Summarised inspection findings

Tipperty School

Aberdeenshire Council

29 November 2022

Key contextual information

Tipperty School is a small rural school situated approximately three miles south of Ellon in Aberdeenshire. The current school roll is 23 children arranged across two, multi-stage composite classes. A majority of children access free school meals. Since 2019 the school has experienced significant changes in staffing, including the appointment of a new headteacher.

Almost all children engaged well in home learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. Teachers used a mixture of online learning and resource packs in response to the individual needs of children and their families. Children posted their finished work using digital applications so that teachers could check their progress in learning and give helpful feedback.

Families value the support given to them during the COVID-19 pandemic. Teachers responded well to the individual needs of families, providing individualised resources.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment	satisfactory
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	

■ There is a warm, happy positive and nurturing ethos at the school. The shared values of safe, achieving, responsible, and respectful reflects a commitment to children's rights. The school's positive ethos is supporting children's engagement in learning. All staff treat children as individuals. As a result, children are proud to be a member of the school. All children feel safe, valued and encouraged to flourish.

■ Relationships between staff and the headteacher are a key strength of the school resulting in effective teamwork. There is a strong sense of mutual respect and regard between all staff. The very supportive relationships are helping staff to know children's needs well. Staff respect and value children's contributions to their own learning and that of others. As a result, children are developing a growing awareness of what teachers expect them to achieve.

■ A majority of learners engage well in learning activities. Since the pandemic, staff are supporting younger children to develop skills which are helping them engage with learning. Older children are regaining their motivation and curiosity for learning. Working collaboratively, they engage more effectively with their peers. However, most children expressed a view that the work they are doing is not sufficiently challenging. Teachers should ensure that all activities are matched to learner's needs and encourage children to think for themselves.

■ Teachers describe the confidence they have developed during periods of remote learning in using digital tools. This increased understanding and development of digital technologies is helping staff to ensure that leaning is motivating and meaningful. Older children use digital devices confidently to support their learning, for example to carry out research. They present information through slideshows and videos to their peers. Older children joined virtually with a

teacher in China to learn Mandarin. Most children use digital technology to support their homework. Teachers use digital platforms to share examples of children's work with parents. A few parents would like to understand more fully the progress their child is making. There is scope for digital technologies to be used more widely with younger children.

■ The headteacher used the context of COVID-19 as an opportunity to review and refresh how indoor and outdoor spaces within the school could be better used to engage learners. For example, building on national guidance during the pandemic to take learning outside, staff, together with parents, have redesigned outdoor spaces. These flexible and attractive spaces are supporting staff to use outdoor learning as an important aspect of their teaching. Younger children are beginning to show increased confidence when working outdoors. They are starting to make sense of the world through imaginary outdoor play. Their health and wellbeing, personal, social and communication skills are beginning to improve because of new opportunities to learn. Staff should continue to build on these opportunities so that all children can learn outdoors in a planned and progressive way.

■ Staff are at the early stages of developing learning through play, particularly at early level. They have developed spaces to provide improved opportunities for play based learning. Staff interact well with children to support their learning. Younger children are beginning to explore, experiment, discover and solve problems in imaginative and playful ways. Staff now need to develop further their understanding of child development theories and pedagogy through available research in, for example, Realising the Ambition: Being Me.

■ Overall the quality of teaching across the school is satisfactory. Teachers provide clear instruction which helps children understand what they need to do. Most teaching is teacher led. Children are beginning to answer questions confidently. As identified, staff now need to improve the quality of questioning to enable children to build on the ideas of others and engage in more critical thinking.

■ Teachers provide timely, effective written and oral feedback about how well children are learning. This is not yet consistent across the school. Teachers should extend the range of approaches used to feedback on children's work so that children have a clearer understanding of what they need to do to be successful. Children self-assess their work and that of others using a smiley face system. This is helping them to recognise when they and others are working and achieving well.

■ The headteacher has improved approaches to capturing the range of assessment evidence available for each child since the start of the pandemic. The introduction of assessment files support staff to engage in professional dialogue about children's progress based on a range of assessment evidence. Teacher's confidence in their professional judgement is increasing as a result. The headteacher has successfully introduced an assessment calendar which allows children to demonstrate their knowledge, understanding and skills in different contexts. The headteacher meets teachers three times a year to discuss and understand the progress children are making. Teachers are beginning to use these discussions and the information from assessments to plan more effectively the next steps in children's learning.

■ Teachers are developing their understanding of national standards through moderating children's learning amongst themselves and with a small school cluster group. As a next step, teachers would benefit from moderating children's work with a wider range of colleagues. This will support teachers to validate the reliability of their professional judgements of children's progress and better help them to understand progression through Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels.

■ Staff use assessment information, CfE experiences and outcomes, and local authority progression frameworks to support their planning to meet the needs of learners. More work is needed to ensure that staff planning based on children's next steps in learning, rather than planning being driven by a specific resource.

■ Skilled PSA's work effectively with teachers to support the needs of identified children well. They observe learning closely to inform well timed interventions and further learning. A few children use helpful symbols to support them understand daily routines and to listen to and follow instructions. Staff should continue to support all children, and in particular those with identified needs, to become more independent in their learning. Individual education plans are in place for those children for whom they are appropriate. Children's progress is measured against these plans, discussed with parents and adjustments are made if necessary.

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	**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

- Across the school, attainment in literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics is satisfactory. Overall, the majority of children across all stages have achieved, or are on track to achieve, appropriate levels of attainment in listening and talking, reading, writing and numeracy. Children's attainment in literacy and English is slightly stronger than in numeracy and mathematics. Levels of attainment are strongest at the upper stages of the school. Data in listening and talking is not yet sufficiently robust.

- The headteacher has improved approaches to capturing the range of assessment evidence available for each child since the start of the pandemic. The introduction of assessment files supports staff to engage in professional dialogue about children's progress based on a range of assessment evidence. Teacher's confidence in their professional judgement is increasing as a result. The headteacher and teachers should now work together to use assessment information more rigorously to monitor the progress individual children are making in their learning. This will enable staff to see where progress is being made and were further support interventions are required to improve attainment.

Attainment in literacy and English
- Overall, the majority of children are making satisfactory progress in literacy and English.

Listening and talking
- Overall, the majority of children and making satisfactory progress in developing their listening and talking skills. Recently introduced 'talking boxes' are helping children to develop key skills in listening and talking, including asking and answering questions. Although still at an early stage of development, there are early indications that this is supporting children's confidence when speaking to an audience. Older children would benefit from developing further their ability to build on the contributions of others during group discussions.

Reading
- Overall, the majority of children are making satisfactory progress in reading. Younger children are beginning to identify initial sounds. The majority of children at the middle and upper stages read with fluency and expression. They can make relevant comments about features of language in texts, such as sentence structure and punctuation. Children enjoy selecting books from the range of texts available in the school library. Children at the upper stages should be encouraged to select texts regularly for enjoyment. Children should read a wider range of texts, including historical fiction, biography and information books.

Writing

■ Overall, children are making satisfactory progress in writing. The majority of children can create a variety of texts for different purposes. Younger children would benefit from support to develop correct letter formation. They need greater opportunities to explore patterns and sounds in a range of play, imaginative and real contexts. The majority of children at the middle stages can spell most commonly-used words, using their knowledge of letter patterns and spelling rules. Most children at the upper stages can write an extended piece of writing using paragraphs to separate thoughts and ideas. They can link sentences effectively using a range of conjunctions. Children should continue to develop their ability to convey information, describe events, share opinions and persuade others as appropriate to the purpose.

Numeracy and mathematics

■ Overall, the majority of children are making satisfactory progress in numeracy and mathematics.

Number, money and measure

■ The majority of children are developing their understanding of number and number processes appropriate to their age and stage. At the middle stages a few children can explain what a fraction is using appropriate mathematical language and pictorial representation. Older children can show the equivalent form of simple fractions, decimal fractions and percentages. The headteacher has identified correctly the impact of the pandemic on children's understanding and use of money. Children should continue to have opportunities to investigate how different combinations of coins and notes can be used to pay for goods or be given in change. Children would benefit from further opportunities to apply their numeracy skills in real-life situations.

Shape, position and movement

■ The majority of children can identify a range of two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects. The majority of children at the middle and upper stages can use a range of mathematical language to describe the properties of a range of two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects. They should develop this further to demonstrate their understanding between three-dimensional objects and their nets. The majority of children at the upper stages can use mathematical language to classify a range of angles within shapes in the environment.

Information handling

■ The majority of children can present data in a variety of ways. Younger children can sort objects in a range of ways. The majority of older children at the middle and upper stages can use a variety of methods, such as pie charts and graphs, to display data. They can identify the key features of a graph, using appropriate vocabulary. There is potential to build on these existing skills by using digital technology.

Attainment over time in literacy and numeracy and mathematics

■ The headteacher is developing the school's approaches to monitoring children's progress over time. Staff are now well placed to use the information gained through this monitoring process to ensure children receive the right support to make progress in their learning. Identified progress through Curriculum for Excellence levels should reflect more accurately the date when this is achieved by individual children. This is currently too generic and does not take sufficient account of each child's capacity for improvement. This will help identify the impact specific interventions and strategies are having on raising attainment, both for individuals and the school as a whole. The robustness of professional judgement should continue to be developed through internal and external moderation activities.

Quality of learners' achievements

■ Staff recognise and celebrate achievements well in a variety of ways, such as through displays, using a digital application and in newsletters. Children throughout the school have opportunities to be part of working groups for the benefit of the school community. This supports the development of children's leadership skills in a real-life context. Curriculum-based activities support children to achieve and strengthen their knowledge and skills relating to environmental issues. These include John Muir and Royal Horticultural Society Awards, and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds wild-life challenge. Children are not yet able to discuss the skills they are learning through their achievements and where they could use these skills in real life situations. They would benefit from regular discussion with staff to help them identify these skills and opportunities for them to apply them across their learning in school and beyond. Staff should track these achievements to ensure that children have opportunities for a range of successes and that no child misses out.

Equity for all learners

■ All staff understand the socio-economic background of children and families. Pupil Equity Funding is used appropriately to provide targeted support for groups and individuals. For example, the provision of outdoor learning experiences is supporting children to engage in learning. Identified groups and individual leaners are beginning to talk about, plan, and draft and revise their writing more accurately. This is helping to improve both their language and writing skills. There is potential to strengthen further the monitoring of the impact on outcomes for children to accelerate their progress further.

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.