

Summarised inspection findings

Colmonell Primary School and Early Years Centre

South Ayrshire Council

20 June 2023

Key contextual information

Colmonell Primary School and Early Years Centre (EYC) is located in the rural village of Colmonell in South Ayrshire Council, 13 miles south of Girvan. The school catchment area takes in the communities of Colmonell, Pinmore, Pinwherry and surrounding areas. There are 38 children in the primary school in two multi-composite classes. All children attending the school live in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) data zones 4 and 5.

The senior leadership team consists of a headteacher and a part-time principal teacher, who is fully class committed. The headteacher is head of two schools and has been headteacher of Colmonell Primary School since the new school building was completed in 2011. The school is partnered with Ballantrae Primary School and EYC. During the pandemic and into the period of recovery, staff absence and recruitment has been managed well by the headteacher.

1.3 Leadership of change

very good

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 provides strong, highly-effective and very well-judged leadership and direction for the whole school. She has a clear focus on ensuring children's wellbeing and meeting the needs of families. As a result, there is an inclusive, family feel to the school community. The headteacher has an accurate view of the strengths within and across the school and EYC, as well as specific and common areas for further development. The headteacher is highly respected and valued across the school community.
- The school and EYC have recently reviewed and updated the vision, values and aims. In line with the school's dedicated approach to working closely with the school community, the vision, values and aims were developed in partnership with children and families. Children talk confidently about the values of happy, honest, hardworking, creative, courageous and accepting. Staff and children demonstrate the values through their relationships and actions in the daily life of the school. Children are proud to be a nominated Values Ambassador and enjoy looking for examples of children who are displaying the values. Parents and carers share children's achievements from outside school and are beginning to link them to the values.
- Children are meaningfully involved in leadership groups called Community Action Learning Families (CALF). The groups consist of children across all stages, with children identifying the themes they want to explore. Chosen themes include supporting the local Cosy Hub, helping out with the cost of living crisis and supporting those struggling with their mental health. The groups link with national organisations to support their work. For example, the Learning About Forests group are linking with Keep Scotland Beautiful to share messages about litter in the community. Children plan to invite parents to help with a steering group and join activities every week. Children use the national self-evaluation resource How good is OUR school? to explore areas in the school that require improvement. Children feel included and listened to regarding

issues that affect them. Older children have the opportunity to become house captains with children across the school choosing their preferred candidate.

- All staff have clear leadership roles that are linked to school improvement priorities. These include leading on learning journals, outdoor learning and global diversity. The headteacher should continue to review leadership responsibilities to support her strategic as well as managerial role.
- All staff demonstrate a very effective collaborative approach to continuous improvement. They are keen to learn from others to ensure they continue to refine and improve their practice. Staff value the opportunities they have for professional dialogue. This helps them to support regularly one another in improving further their consistently high-quality learning and teaching. Staff access a variety of professional learning opportunities. As planned, staff should continue to look outwards at practice within and beyond their own cluster and authority. This will continue to improve their work and strengthen further their effective practice.
- The headteacher monitors the work of the school very well. She has embedded a comprehensive improvement calendar to monitor and evaluate the quality and impact of children's learning experiences. Approaches include sampling the work of children, visiting classes to observe children's experiences and peer observations between Colmonell Primary School and their partner school. As planned, a review of monitoring activities will develop further the self-evaluation process and widen the use of national self-evaluation frameworks.
- The headteacher keeps parents informed about school and national improvement priorities effectively during Parent Council meetings and other forms of communication. Parents also contributed their thoughts and ideas to the national discussion on education. The headteacher uses parent views well to inform priorities within the improvement plan and review the whole school vision, values and aims.
- The headteacher uses self-evaluation processes very well to support strategic planning for continuous improvement. Staff have clear, relevant targets for improvement which support an appropriate pace of change. Staff are very positive about the collegiate and collaborative nature of the school's work in both securing improvements and in leading change. The positive working relationships with the partner school has supported successful joint working and professional development. Staff work very well with each other and with colleagues across the cluster, both primary and secondary, to develop a clear and shared understanding of curriculum developments. For example, the sharing of effective practice and development of learning and teaching approaches in science. This ensures a consistency of science experiences, knowledge and understanding from primary to secondary school.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

very 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

- Senior leaders and staff have embedded fully a welcoming, nurturing ethos where all children are encouraged to do their best. Relationships across the school are positive and supportive between staff and children and between children and their peers.
- Most children engage confidently with the range of stimulating learning experiences on offer both indoors and outdoors. They enthusiastically engage with a wide range of real and meaningful contexts for learning. Children are particularly motivated by learning outdoors as they enjoy the freedom to explore the local area throughout the year. Most children concentrate for extended periods of time. For example, when building structures within the block play area, and the recently introduced 'Tinker Time'. This is developing very well children's skills in problem solving, curiosity and creativity.
- Teachers use effectively a range of active learning and teaching approaches which enable children to learn with and from each other. Across the school, most children are motivated to learn. They respond promptly to the clear explanations and instructions from their teachers. All staff make very good use of questioning to support learning. Older children are developing well their ability to ask and answer a range of higher order thinking questions. As planned, teachers should continue to embed the use of meta-skills to enable children to deepen further their learning.
- Staff share consistently differentiated learning intentions and effective success criteria with children. This provides children with clear guidance on what they are learning and the steps they need to be successful. Children are involved regularly in self and peer-assessment. Overall, teachers provide useful feedback to children on their learning.
- Staff and children use digital technologies across the curriculum very effectively to enhance learning and teaching. For example, the use of digital microscopes to study plants. Children have access to computers and devices in class, using these confidently for individual learning activities. In addition, they access software programmes to personalise learning, most recently to develop their skills in animation. Staff take photographs or videos during outdoor learning experiences. They use this information effectively, enabling children to research and share information with each other once they return to class. This deepens children's knowledge and understanding of the natural world and supports next steps in learning.
- Staff monitor and check children's progress effectively using a range of standardised and diagnostic assessments. This includes National Standardised Assessments to identify gaps in individual children's progress. Teaching staff from Colmonell Primary School and their partner school meet three times per year to evaluate and moderate their professional judgements. Together with the headteacher, staff analyse the results of a range of standardised and

class-based assessments purposefully. This supports teachers to identify effective strategies for children who require more challenge in their learning as well as those who need support. The introduction of digital learning journals is developing further teacher's accurate recording of children's next steps. Children are able to talk about events and experiences recorded in their journals. Parents are encouraged to contribute to journals, sharing achievements from home and commenting on summaries of learning experiences.

- Staff are developing successfully play pedagogy with all children. They make effective use of the early years national guidance, 'Realising the Ambition: Being Me' to develop further their understanding of play pedagogy. Most children sustain their concentration and engage well with the range of opportunities to learn through play. Staff plan direct teaching of groups and play opportunities well. They should now evaluate regularly their approach at key points in the year. This would help ensure they continue to build on their successes and ensure outcomes for learners are consistently challenging. In doing this, staff should continue to develop a full understanding of the role of the adult in the play environment. Staff should continue to work in partnership with practitioners in the EYC to develop further play based learning and pedagogy across the school.
- Planning of learning takes place in a variety of ways across the school, through individual, short, medium and long term planning. Staff plan and deliver high quality learning experiences which are progressive and are built on prior learning. Staff jointly plan using the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) four contexts which supports coherence, relevance and breadth of learning. Teachers are deepening children's understanding of their learning by planning the use of meta-skills in the classroom. Teachers take into account children's interests, ideas and questions. Children's voice is a high priority for staff. They include United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) articles within learning experiences. Teachers could increase links to the principles of curriculum design in order to improve further depth and coherence across all curricular areas. This could be included in the planned review of the learning and teaching policy to reflect the school's developments in pedagogical approaches.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- Staff and parents updated the whole school curriculum rationale this year. The rationale incorporates and explains the context and approaches that are unique to Colmonell Primary and Early Years Centre. Parents and carers contributed to the rationale using an online tool. The rationale is used effectively to reflect on practice and inform school improvement.
- Teachers use progression frameworks for all curriculum areas and make links to children's learning using the digital learning journals. Children at all stages benefit from a clear, progressive skills programme in French. They are also developing their use and understanding of Scots language as part of the school's 1+2 programme.
- Staff plan transitions at key points including from the EYC to P1 and P7 to secondary school. Parents are invited to events to find out about their child's move to P1 and value these opportunities. Younger children are confident in an environment they get to know well during their time at the EYC. P7 children take part in a well-established transition programme for their move to Girvan Academy. This includes the transfer of wellbeing information, visits to the school by secondary teachers and visits to Girvan Academy by children at the end of term four.
- The curriculum reflects the local context very effectively as well as the global context. Learning for sustainability is a key driver. Staff links to Scottish and international schools enhances children's knowledge and understanding of themes including gender equality, climate action and climate justice. All children benefit from lessons in various curricular areas which support their application of skills and curriculum knowledge in real-life contexts.
- Across the school, staff provide children with appropriate opportunities to take part in two hours quality physical education across the week.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- Staff have built very effective partnerships and relationships with the local community. They utilise the skills and talents of parents and community partners to ensure children are provided with a growing range of outdoor experiences and community activities.
- Homework is shared in digital learning journals for older children. Staff produce a CfE newsletter with detailed information on how parents can help at home. This is well received and supports meaningful parental engagement. Children and families are given the option to choose if and when they participate in homework tasks. This takes into consideration the busy lives of children and parents and large distances travelled to access services. Parents and carers appreciate this awareness of their circumstances.
- Parents enjoy opportunities to visit the school, with a recent open afternoon being a success. Parents' feedback included how useful they found observing a variety of learning and enjoyed seeing confident, happy and settled children.

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. At the time of the inspection, there were no identified areas for development.

3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

very good

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 maximise their successes and achievements. The themes are:

- wellbeing
- fulfilment of statutory duties
- inclusion and equality

- All staff prioritise children's health and wellbeing which is viewed as an essential factor in successful learning. As a result, almost all children feel safe and secure. All children benefit from the range of activities to promote wellbeing. Staff develop global citizenship through links with a school in Abu Dhabi. This broadens children's experience and knowledge of the world. Children are also working with local initiatives to deepen their understanding of their wellbeing. This includes interacting with the locally designated United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) Biosphere. Most children are very aware and use the language of children's rights in their everyday discussions and learning. Most children are aware of current global issues including climate change, gender and justice.
- All children have a voice in the school, with their decisions making a difference and their impact being detailed in action plans. All children contribute to CALF in which they lead and contribute to improve aspects of the school and the community. As a result, most children develop their leadership skills, team working and social skills very well. They are developing their responsible citizenship skills through a wide variety of community initiatives. These include, designing posters and putting up dog waste bag dispensers in the village.
- Staff incorporate the language of wellbeing into experiences throughout the day. Almost all children use the language of the wellbeing indicators every day through daily check-ins. Teachers should keep this approach under review as a few children find this challenging and would benefit from a more individualised approach. As planned, the continued use of a wellbeing survey will ensure staff are aware of children's feelings, views and ideas. Most children feel listened to, safe and are confident to approach staff if they need support.
- Children take part enthusiastically in an extensive range of planned outdoor learning and physical activity experiences. They explore a local woodland garden and a riverside area in the village. Physical activities include swimming lessons and an after-school football club. Most children's leadership skills, teamwork and resilience have developed further as a result. This contributes to a strong and shared sense of health and wellbeing which all staff promote and which all children benefit from. Most children are confident with ball skills, balancing and climbing. Almost all children are making very good progress with their skills in turn taking, problem solving and sharing ideas through their use of loose parts during break times. In addition, the wide variety of surfaces, resources and trees support children to manage their own risk. As planned, the agreement of a vision for outdoor learning and development of a progression framework for meta-skills will develop further outdoor learning.
- The school submitted information relating to compliance with the revised Nutritional Regulations 2020 and key duties as required by The Schools (Health Promotion and Nutrition) (Scotland) Act 2007. The Health and Nutrition Inspector (HNI) discussed this information with

relevant staff and children. In addition, the HNI examined documentation relating to the effectiveness of whole-school approaches to improving the health and wellbeing of children through food in school. Areas for development have been agreed with the school and the school meals provider.

- Almost all children benefit from a daily healthy snack service. They eat a wide variety of fruit and vegetables and this is improving their health and wellbeing and awareness of healthy foods. The headteacher plans to provide a progressive programme for practical food skills. This will extend further children's knowledge of food and how it is safely prepared.
- Staff undertake appropriate professional learning to ensure they are kept up to date with information relevant to children requiring additional support. The headteacher and staff ensure that this training leads to measurable improvements in children's wellbeing, through regular check-ins with staff and professional dialogue. They reflect on children's changing needs and plan, participate and use training to meet their health and wellbeing requirements.
- All staff are aware of their responsibilities in relation to safeguarding and keeping children safe. All staff have completed training in line with their responsibilities and codes of practice. They know their children and families very well, including those who may require additional support. The headteacher and staff use the local authority staged intervention approaches very effectively to assess and support children. The headteacher and class teachers track the progress and attainment of children with additional support needs very well. Individualised plans support children well, with appropriate targets in place. Staff involve parents in planning meetings and very effectively include children's views when agreeing targets and next steps. This results in very good outcomes for these children. Staff provide targeted interventions to identified cohorts of learners to raise attainment. These include children who have barriers to learning. Staff track their progress carefully to ensure the interventions are having an impact.
- Staff track children's progress in health and wellbeing across the school. Senior leaders and teachers can evidence the progress all children are making in their wellbeing. In addition, attendance is monitored closely and early action is taken to prevent non-attendance becoming a barrier to learning. As a result, attendance is in line, or above the local and national average.
- The school value of 'accepting' supports discussion and approaches towards diversity and inclusion. Most children refer to and use agreed prompts to recognise behaviour that is inclusive and to challenge discrimination. Almost all children are supportive of each other. The headteacher is a strong advocate for children and families who are facing challenging circumstances. All staff support this approach and are extremely aware of the impact barriers to learning have on the progress of children's learning.

3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

very 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 English and numeracy and mathematics is very good. Most children are achieving expected CfE levels in reading, writing, talking and listening and numeracy. Almost all children experiencing barriers to learning are making very good progress from prior learning.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, most children are making very good progress in literacy and English. Across the school attainment in literacy and English is very good.

Listening and talking

- At early level, the majority of children listen well to adults and follow instructions. They contribute their thoughts, feelings and ideas very well. At first level, most children talk about their experiences and share ideas with confidence. At second level, most children are confident to speak in smaller group situations. Overall, children need to develop further skills in taking turns in discussions when engaging with others without adult direction.

Reading

- All children choose a book from the visiting library van. This enables all children to read a wide variety of texts. At early level, all children enjoy familiar stories with an adult. At first level, most children read aloud fluently and with expression. They explain their preferences for texts and authors. They now need to develop their skills in sharing their thoughts about characters and settings. At second level, most children read with fluency and expression using appropriate pace and tone. They identify different genres of text and explain their reasons for choosing a book.

Writing

- At early level, most children use their knowledge of sounds to spell common words. They use capital letters and full stops to create simple sentences independently. At first level, most children write independently, punctuating most sentences accurately. They create texts for different purposes including creating a range of questions on individual reading books. All children experience a wide range of genres during literacy time. A few need support to understand better the genres and how they link to real life contexts. At second level, most children write sentences in a grammatically accurate way, with appropriate punctuation. They create interesting characters and settings and apply features of a chosen genre. Older children create meaningful persuasive pieces of writing using real-life contexts and had a recent successful bid to keep their old school laptops and devices.

Attainment in numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, most children are making very good progress in numeracy and mathematics. Across the school, attainment in numeracy and mathematics is very good.

Number, money and measure

- At early level, most children are confidently working with numbers up to 30 and a few beyond. They complete missing number patterns and have a good awareness of coins. At first level, most children are confident carrying out a range of calculations and using strategies to work out the answer. They would benefit from further work on fractions. At second level, children confidently use the four operations to solve calculations and word problems. Staff should consider revisiting children's understanding of converting decimals to fractions and percentages.

Shape, position and movement

- Children across the school are developing a very good understanding of two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects. At early level, children are developing an awareness of symmetry. At first and second level, most children are confident with compass directions and coordinates. They are confident with types of angle, including complementary and supplementary angles.

Information handling

- At early level, children sort items into groups. At first and second level, most children are developing a very good understanding of bar graphs and tally charts. Children at first and second level have a very good understanding of ideas of uncertainty, probability and chance.

Attainment over time

- Overall, most children make very good progress in literacy and numeracy over time. The headteacher and staff use data very effectively to plan specific interventions to close gaps and accelerate progress for all children. The headteacher plans to develop further approaches to tracking children's attainment over time with the developing use of the digital learning journals. This should also support the streamlining of documentation currently used for monitoring and tracking.

Overall quality of learner's achievements

- Staff praise and encourage children's achievements through weekly celebrations of success within class. Children also receive house points, values certificates, become a Values Ambassador and have their learning displayed in a WOW work wall. There is evidence in children's learning journals of a wide range of learning and achievements from outside the school. This is due to successful partnerships with parents and carers who gather and take account of children's achievements. These are celebrated and staff build on learning and skills for individual children. In addition, children experience success in a wide variety of achievements including national awards, projects to support lifesaving skills and school celebrations of awards. The achievements are linked to the CfE four capacities and skills for learning, life and work. Older children are increasingly linking these achievements to meta-skills.

Equity for all learners

- Staff across the school have a very good understanding of the social, economic and cultural context of the school community. They understand the demographics and unique rural context that the school operates within. As a result, they know the children and families very well and understand their learners' needs. They place high importance on supporting the emotional and social needs of all children.

- The Parent Council provide very good financial support to the school in order that all children have experience of various educational visits and residential experiences. This includes funding for a P7 camping trip and an annual whole school trip. This funding prevents children from missing out due to their rural location and benefitting from experiences that support their wellbeing.
- Senior leaders monitor the progress of individuals and groups of children closely. Staff provide a range of effective interventions for children who do not make expected levels of progress or who have barriers to their learning. Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) contributes to the accessibility and participation in out of school activities and achievements.

Practice worth sharing more widely

All primary children are part of Community Action Learning Families (CALF). This reflects the strong commitment to supporting the local rural community and including children in a variety of ways. Staff and children define community as a group of people who share a common goal or purpose. They also define action as doing something practical to make a difference. There are seven groups with themes identified by the children. They are; the LEAF group focusing on biodiversity and deforestation in the wild; cosy spaces; the cost of living; playground problems; caring for pets; mental health; and children affected by wars.

An outline and rationale for the groups was created and referred to by all staff. This clearly details the aim of the groups as children sharing a common goal and working together to take action and make a difference in the world around us. The document explains the principles behind CALF, how projects are identified, how families are identified, adult support involved and how long a group should last.

Each group completes an action plan with a staff member. The action plans detail aims, actions, who, what and how members are responsible for the actions, checking progress and an evaluation/development section. The plans have a date range and the headteacher monitors all of the action plans as part of school improvement and self-evaluation processes.

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.