Summarised inspection findings

Findochty Primary School

Moray Council

19 November 2024

Key contextual information

Findochty Primary School is a non-denominational school serving the village and surrounding areas of Findochty in Moray. Findochty Nursery, a stand-alone nursery, shares the school building. There are 55 children across three composite classes. The headteacher has been in post since 2014. Almost all children live in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) data zones five to seven. Across the school, 19% of children have additional support needs and 7.2% have English as an additional language. Attendance is 95.4% which is above the local and national average.

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

■ All staff work well together and collectively they demonstrate a commitment to improving outcomes for children. All staff, embrace fully the school vision where 'every child is supported to be the best they can be'. As a result, all children experience happy, calm learning spaces with adults who support them well. Almost all children like learning in the school and feel they are encouraged to do their best. Most parents are comfortable approaching the school and feel it is well led and managed.

■ In June 2023, the headteacher liaised well with children, staff and parents to update the school vision, values and aims. Staff ensured their effective developments around children's rights and approaches to achieving positive wellbeing for all children were central to this work. This has resulted in establishing a vision, values and aims that reflect better the school's current context. Staff have worked well to ensure the new values are embedded into practice. Most children can articulate confidently and demonstrate effectively the new values in their daily interactions with adults and one another. As a result, children are developing well their skills as responsible citizens and effective contributors.

■ The headteacher and staff now need to formalise the school's approaches to self-evaluation and quality assurance to provide greater rigour in gathering robust evidence to evaluate the school's progress. The headteacher needs to create a quality assurance calendar to identify relevant activity that will capture more effectively, progress in the school's improvement journey. For example, staff need to formalise procedures to review evidence of children's learning and undertake focus groups. This should more effectively support their evaluations of the quality of learning and teaching. In addition, better use could be made of all information gathered to increase the pace of school improvement work.

■ The headteacher and staff have created an improvement plan. However, this identifies too many different areas for improvement. As a result of too many competing priorities, the impact of this work is reduced. The headteacher and staff now need to develop more robust approaches to self-evaluation and use this to streamline and prioritise more effectively, school improvement planning. Staff could make better use of their reflections on the success of recent

improvements in developing children's enthusiasm for reading for pleasure. This work provides an effective model to support the planning of school improvement work going forward.

- All staff have undertaken a variety of professional learning to support improvements in wellbeing, numeracy, reading and writing. Staff engage enthusiastically with professional learning and use it proactively to improve their practice. For example, recent learning around the teaching of numeracy has led to changes in pedagogical approaches which has improved children's experiences in numeracy.

- All teachers talk positively about the variety of whole school leadership roles they have to develop areas such as eco, health and wellbeing and children's rights. This work is having a positive impact on improving children's knowledge and experiences in these areas. The headteacher should build on teachers' approaches to improvement by ensuring these are evaluated clearly to inform future improvement priorities. Staff, and a group of children acting as reading ambassadors, have led successfully, developments in promoting reading for pleasure for all children. Together, they arrange book swaps, work with local authors and have created a 'book neuk' in the playground. This is encouraging children to read in a variety of contexts. As a result, children's enthusiasm to read for pleasure has significantly improved and is beginning to have a positive impact on reading attainment. All teachers are members of Moray Improvement Groups to develop other aspects of the school's work. This is allowing staff to work with colleagues from other schools to identify, enact and evaluate the process of change.

- All children undertake enthusiastically, various leadership roles across the school. All children are assigned roles as part of a committee such as pupil leadership team, health committee or reading ambassadors. They share proudly their contributions to these groups at assemblies such as gaining accreditation and awards for their work on eco, children's rights and reading. The pupil leadership group have initiated activity with a member of staff to review the school's work using How Good is OUR School? As a result, children contribute well using their reflections about school life to identify areas for improvement. In addition, older children confidently act as play leaders and buddies to support younger children with a variety of learning and achievement opportunities. This is supporting well a nurturing culture as well as allowing children to develop key skills in communication and resilience.

- All staff have a clear understanding of their school context and know families very well. They have a strong awareness of the impact of barriers to some children's learning such as poverty and additional support needs. The headteacher has worked effectively with parents and staff to plan the best use of Pupil Equity Funding (PEF). This is used appropriately to provide a breakfast club which runs three mornings a week. In addition, funding has been allocated to supporting families with packs to support effective transitions. Both interventions support well children's wellbeing and readiness to learn.

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

■ Across the school, children benefit from learning in a warm, happy and nurturing ethos. Staff have worked well to establish, promote and maintain very positive relationships. This is impacting strongly on promoting high standards of behaviour by children. Staff reinforce daily the standard of behaviour expected through the school values and shared understanding of children's rights. As a result, all children are motivated learners who behave well and are proud of their school.

■ Most children engage well in lessons and work effectively both independently and in pairs. In most lessons, teachers plan varied learning across the different year groups in classes. Teachers must now ensure they plan for the differing abilities within each year group more effectively by providing appropriately challenging learning activities for every child.

■ In most lessons, teachers refer well to prior lessons to support children to link new learning to previous learning. All teachers' explanations and instructions are clear when introducing learning activities. All teachers identify clearly the purpose of the lesson. Teachers should now engage in dialogue with children to identify together what children need to do to be successful.

■ In a few lessons, teachers encourage children to self-assess their learning. However, teachers need to develop effective approaches to sharing how children can be successful in order for children to benefit from peer- and self-assessment. In addition, children require support to learn the skills necessary to self and peer-assess effectively. Once established, children will be supported to understand better their learning needs and begin to take increased responsibility for their learning. All teachers provide children with regular quality verbal feedback on their learning and in a few cases, teachers provide written feedback. Teachers now need to refine their approaches to providing written feedback that supports children's progress towards their next steps in learning.

■ Most teachers use a range of formative assessment strategies effectively. In most lessons, teachers use questioning very well to check children's understanding, to extend their thinking and to provide additional challenge. As a result, most children are developing well their skills in being curious and creative. Teachers should now use children's responses more effectively to provide learning experiences at the right level of difficulty.

■ All teachers work well together to share ideas with one another and plan learning using new agreed learning pathways in their classes. They plan across different timescales both long and short-term. However, planning structures and approaches vary across classes. The headteacher and staff must now review and improve their planning systems to ensure there is a consistent approach adopted. Teachers use a variety of sources to support their planning but now need to more closely align planning to the new agreed learning pathways. The

headteacher must ensure time is allocated to support teachers to become familiar with the new pathways.

■ All teachers use electronic whiteboards effectively to display learning and for presentations, activities and games. In a few lessons, teachers use the whiteboards interactively with children as they learn which supports greater engagement. All children have access regularly to digital resources such as desktops, laptops and tablet devices. Staff should continue to develop their use of digital technology to enrich and support children's learning. Teachers must ensure that children's digital literacy skills are developed in a planned and progressive way.

■ Staff at the early level demonstrate enthusiasm to explore and develop play to improve younger children's learning experiences. Staff now provide adult initiated opportunities for children to learn regularly in a play-based environment. Children are developing their social and communication skills well as they play together. Staff now need to review the learning environment to provide additional time for children to experience more open-ended play opportunities. By doing so, staff will then be providing experiences that offer a greater balance between child-led and adult-initiated experiences. In addition, they should focus on how they use observation more effectively to identify key learning as a result of children's play.

■ Teachers use a variety of assessments to support their judgement on children's progress and attainment. However, these are too variable and do not always link sufficiently with national expectations. The headteacher must now consider plans to streamline approaches to assessment activity that identifies clearly how children's progress is in line with national expectations. Staff must now work together to create a clear assessment calendar which highlights key activities throughout the year to support the tracking and monitoring of attainment. Staff need to revisit the use of high-quality assessment activity to evaluate children's ability to transfer learning into new and unfamiliar contexts. All teachers meet regularly with support staff to plan interventions and support for children with additional support needs. As a result, the needs of children with additional support are being met well.

■ All teachers have completed moderation activity both within school and across their learning community. This has focused mainly on moderating the outcome of children's writing against national Benchmarks. Teachers now need to broaden the reach of moderation to other curricular areas. In addition, teachers should ensure they use all aspects of the moderation cycle such as the moderation of planning and learning and teaching.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

■ Teachers are at the early stages of engaging with Moray Council's learning pathways across almost all curricular areas. Once these are embedded, the new pathways will support teachers to identify and plan more effectively for progression across all stages in school. Teachers should now be given time to review the pathways and ensure they have full understanding of how to use these to support effective, progressive planning.

■ Children learn effectively about relationships through a planned progressive programme. This has supported well teacher's efforts in promoting positive relationships and wellbeing. The headteacher must now ensure that teachers and children have access to a high-quality progressive curriculum for all aspects of the health and wellbeing curriculum.

■ Teachers plan progressively using the Moray learning pathway for religious and moral education. Children talk confidently about Christianity and aspects of other world religions. This is supporting their developing understanding of diversity in the world.

■ Children benefit from learning through a variety of contexts. Teachers use their local environment well to provide opportunities for children to learn. Children access the beach, library and a variety of community spaces to support their learning across different areas of the curriculum. For example, children are developing skills in art and science as a result of visits to the beach. Teachers need to continue to develop their reflections of appropriate learning contexts as they review their approaches to learning across different subjects.

■ Children are developing well their skills and knowledge of sustainability through topics such as climate change and energy use. The eco committee are supporting this work through planting trees and vegetables and are keen to develop an outdoor classroom. Teachers should now create a progressive outdoor learning pathway to build on these opportunities to support greater progression in outdoor learning skills.

■ Children have benefited from learning about different skills required for the world of work through a careers fair. Staff provided rich opportunities for children to learn about a variety of jobs and also challenged stereotypes associated with different roles. Going forward, staff should align the achievement opportunities children have in and out of school to specific skills for learning, life and work.

■ All children experience high-quality physical education (PE) weekly. Teachers are developing well children's skills and knowledge in different aspects of PE as a result. Teachers must now ensure that all children experience their full entitlement to two hours of PE weekly.

■ Children across the school learn French and children from P5 to P7 learn German in addition as part of the modern languages programme. However, staff need to review their approaches to delivering the modern languages offer to ensure children experience regular progressive learning.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

■ Parents appreciate the variety of methods used to communicate with them such as online platforms, parents' evenings and 'parent postcards'. Parents value the regular whole school and class newsletters which help them understand what their children are learning. The Parent Support Group (PSG) contribute to effective communication by sharing school information through a social media channel. Staff engage regularly with parents through surveys about key themes, such as homework, and use the information well to inform their next steps.

■ Most parents feel staff respond well when issues and queries are raised with them. A minority of parents would like more information on how their child is progressing and have increased opportunities to come into school.

■ The PSG work well with the school and fundraise to reduce financial barriers for families. They provide additional resources to ensure children are not restricted from taking part in activities due to cost. In addition, they support the pre-loved uniform exchange. They are keen to consider how they can help to reduce further the cost of the school day.

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	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 children benefit from the nurturing environments they learn in where staff prioritise children's wellbeing. All staff and children are proud to be part of the 'Finechty Family'. All staff treat children with respect, care and empathy and model respectful relationships between each other, and with children. As a result, most children feel safe in school and almost all feel that staff help them to understand and respect others. Most parents believe that staff help children to be confident and they know their child well as an individual.

■ Children and staff are proud of the significant recognition they have received around their work on developing children's understanding of their rights. The headteacher discusses the 'right of the month' at assemblies to revisit regularly the themes held central within the convention. All classes have an agreed class charter which exemplifies the approach taken by each class to recognise and celebrate children's rights. As a result, children understand well their rights and can articulate how these are upheld across their school experiences. As planned, staff should continue to work with children to develop agreed charters for the playground and lunch hall.

■ Staff ensure that promoting positive relationships is a key driver to support their approaches to developing positive wellbeing. Children demonstrate a good awareness of the wellbeing indicators. The headteacher revisits a different indicator every month at assemblies to ensure the indicators remain prominent as part of school life. All children have developed a strong understanding of how wellbeing impacts their lives. Across the school year, all children provide responses to questionnaires relating to their wellbeing. Staff respond well to any concerns reflected in the questionnaires by holding conversations with children. This allows children an opportunity to discuss their responses and for staff to provide timeous support. In addition, staff collect information using online profiles to gather further wellbeing information for targeted children. As a result of the interventions made by staff, most children feel safe and well supported within the school.

■ All staff engage in professional learning to support children's wellbeing in areas such as autism, anxiety and the impact of trauma, grief and loss. Staff have also engaged with resources and tools to support children's understanding of their emotions. They use these well to help children talk about their emotions and to provide strategies to support them. All children receive an emotional check in with staff each morning which allows children to discuss any worries. All classrooms have calm spaces, 'worry monsters' and 'chillax boxes' to help children regulate their emotions and behaviour when they feel overwhelmed. As a result, most children feel they have someone to talk to if they are worried or upset about something. Most children are comfortable approaching adults with questions or to seek advice. All staff use agreed approaches effectively to support children to build skills in finding solutions to any disagreement. This promotes well an ethos for children of reflection and accountability for their actions. Staff's approaches to supporting children's wellbeing has resulted in children's behaviour and relationships being very positive.

- Staff have an appropriate understanding of their responsibilities and statutory duties related to wellbeing, equality and inclusion. Staff identify accurately children who require additional support. All children with additional support needs have individualised programmes and plans in place. The headteacher holds regular child's planning meetings where targets are set with parents to support children's individual needs. The headteacher should now create an overview that captures coherently the variety of needs across the school. In addition, staff must now ensure they include the views of children as part of the child's planning and review process.

- Teachers meet regularly with support for learning staff to discuss targets for identified children's individual plans. Staff identify well interventions that will help children in class and address any identified barriers and gaps in learning. As a result, teachers are increasingly supporting children with additional needs more effectively. Staff should now improve the rigour around evaluating the impact of all targeted interventions to ensure they are clear on the effectiveness of all approaches to supporting children's additional needs.

- All staff have completed child protection training including training related to national guidance as set out in 'The Promise' and 'Prevent'. The headteacher values the role of partners in supporting children to access their learning. Staff work well with a range of partners to support children's language development and emotional wellbeing. Partners such as educational psychologists, sensory teams and occupational therapists provide support for children with specific needs. This is removing barriers for children and allowing them to access learning more effectively.

- Almost all children say they have opportunities for regular exercise in school and that staff encourage them to maintain a healthy lifestyle. Older children have been trained as play leaders. Play leaders plan activities for children in the playground to support the development of regular physical activity. All children engage in daily toothbrushing which supports good dental hygiene.

- Children have explored friendships and relationships through the school's relationship curriculum. This has resulted in caring, kind and respectful relationships across the school. Children have a good understanding of proactive ways they can promote antibullying across the school. They have a strong understanding about equality. Staff must now plan to support children's understanding of equity, diversity and discrimination.

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
- Due to small numbers of children at each stage, general statements about attainment will be made. Most younger children are achieving national expected levels of attainment in literacy and numeracy. At the middle stages, the majority of children are achieving national expected levels in numeracy and listening and talking and most in reading and writing. Most older children are achieving expected levels in literacy and numeracy.

- Children with additional support needs are making satisfactory progress from their prior levels of attainment.

Attainment in literacy and English
- Most younger children are making good progress in reading and satisfactory progress in writing and listening and talking. At the middle stages, most children are making satisfactory progress in all areas of literacy. Most older children are making good progress in all aspects of literacy. Across the school a few children could achieve more.

Listening and talking
- Most younger children follow simple instructions successfully. They take turns and listen and respond to others appropriately. At the middle stages, the majority of children demonstrate good listening skills and are responding well as they build on the contributions of their peers. A few children need to develop skills to listen more carefully to the opinions of others. Older children contribute ideas confidently in group and class discussions. They listen carefully, recount experiences and build on the ideas of peers well. Across the school, teachers should now ensure they teach explicitly the skills required for effective listening and talking to support improvements in this area of literacy.

Reading
- Younger children are beginning to identify initial sounds. They enjoy exploring texts as they listen to stories read to them. The majority of children at the middle and upper stages read with fluency and expression. They recognise features of language in texts, such as sentence structure and punctuation. All children talk positively about selecting books from the range of interesting texts available in their class and school library. As children move through the school, they explain clearly how the author, cover or title influence their choice of books when reading for enjoyment. Children across the school have an increased enthusiasm for reading as a result of their work with local writers. Children now need to increase their confidence in using strategies for comprehension.

Writing

■ Across the school, most children write a variety of texts for different purposes. Most younger children are learning how to write initial sounds well. They would benefit from exploring patterns and sounds through play contexts to enhance their understanding further. The majority of children at the middle stages spell most commonly used words accurately, using their knowledge of letter patterns and spelling rules well. Most children at the upper stages write extended pieces of writing using paragraphs appropriately to separate thoughts and ideas. Children should continue to develop their ability to convey information, describe events, share opinions and persuade others as appropriate to the purpose. Teachers must now provide effective feedback that identifies accurately children's next steps in writing.

Numeracy and mathematics

■ In numeracy and mathematics, children at second level are making good progress and at early and first level, children are making satisfactory progress. Across the school, there are a few children who could be making better progress.

Number, money and measure

■ Younger children read and write numbers to 10. They now need to extend this to recognising and recording numbers to 20. They confidently compare different sizes and lengths using everyday language such as taller and smaller. Children at the middle stages of the school confidently round numbers to calculate addition problems and order numbers up to 1000. They need to learn more about the standard units used in measuring for weight, volume and length. Older children have a good understanding of the link between fractions, percentages and decimals. They recognise different ways to read the time and convert confidently between 12-and 24-hour time. They would benefit from revisiting strategies to manage more complex multi-step number problems.

Shape, position and movement

■ Almost all younger children recognise simple two-dimensional shapes and can describe a few of the properties they have. Most children at the middle stages recognise most two-dimensional shapes and describe properties of simple three-dimensional objects. They are confident in identifying basic points on a compass and shapes with up to two lines of symmetry. They would benefit from revisiting their knowledge of right angles. Older children confidently name and use mathematical language to describe and draw the properties of a circle. They need to revisit how to record specific points on a grid using the correct order for co-ordinates.

Information handling

■ Most younger children answer questions about simple graphs and charts. Most children would benefit from experience in creating their own charts to learn how to gather and represent information in a variety of ways. Most children at the middle stages answer relevant questions to extract information from various data sources. A minority need to revisit the use of scales on the axes in graphs to learn how amounts can be represented. Most older children talk confidently about different ways to gather and display data accurately such as line graphs and pie charts. A few children describe how they software to create graphs and charts digitally. Most children use the language of probability to describe the likelihood of simple events occurring.

Attainment over time

■ High attendance has been maintained effectively in recent years. Attendance is currently 95.4%. which is above both local and national averages. The headteacher monitors effectively children's attendance, this includes analysing data and identifying any children who show a pattern of absence. The headteacher addresses any issues in attendance in line with local

authority guidance through telephone calls and meetings with parents if problems persist. Staff should continue to work with families to support them to sustain expected levels of attendance.

- Due to smaller numbers of children at each stage, trends in overall attainment data overtime do not provide an accurate overview. The headteacher and teachers therefore discuss progress and attainment of every child individually during termly tracking discussions. Attainment information shows that most children's attainment in literacy and numeracy is improving steadily over time. However, progress in raising attainment is too slow. Teachers should continue to reflect on outcomes of learning against national Benchmarks to support further their judgement of attainment for every child.

- Currently, attainment information is gathered in a wide variety of ways. The headteacher and staff must now use the new tracking system provided by the local authority to gather attainment data more coherently and effectively over time. This should provide a more robust system for collating and streamlining all information they collect about children's attainment and progress.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Children's achievements are acknowledged and celebrated in a variety of ways. These include through school displays, an online platform, social media and whole school assemblies. Children gain confidence and achieve success within and outwith school, through activities such as chess club, Glee club, sewing club and the book neuk. Children enjoy and benefit from working with the wider Findochty community including Findochty Bowling Club, the Salvation Army and the local care home. As a result, they are gaining and developing leadership skills such as co-operation and teamwork.

- The headteacher gathers information on children's participation in wider achievement opportunities. She uses this information well to identify opportunities for children at risk of missing out. There is now a need for school staff to identify and track the skills children gain from these wider activities

Equity for all learners

- All staff understand well the socio-economic background of their children and families. Staff work closely with the PSG to support families including access to recycled uniform and subsidising school trips. This is helping to provide equity of opportunity for all children.

- The school uses PEF effectively to support children affected by financial hardship. For example, the school has a well-established breakfast club which is open to all children. The breakfast club provides a welcoming and nurturing experience for children where older children support younger children very well. This is helping identified children to engage more effectively in their learning in class. The headteacher uses a small amount of PEF funding to support children's transitions into P1. As a result, families feel better prepared to support their child's transition and children have settled well into school.

- The headteacher and staff should now review all targeted interventions so that impact on children's progress can be measured effectively. This will allow staff to identify which interventions have made the biggest difference in improving outcomes for targeted children.

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.