

# Summarised inspection findings

**Mosstowie Primary School**

Moray Council

4 March 2025

# Key contextual information

Mosstowie Primary School is situated three and a half miles west of Elgin in a rural location between the adjoining communities of Miltonduff, Pluscarden and Mosstowie in Moray.

The school roll is 69 children across three multi-stage classes. A majority of children who attend the school reside in decile eight of the Social Index of Multiple Deprivation. A significant minority of children live out with the school's catchment area. A few children require additional support for aspects of their learning. There have been no exclusions in recent years.

The acting headteacher, who was a class teacher in the school for nine years, has been in post since May 2024. Almost all of the permanent staff have worked at the school for over ten years.

1.3 Leadership of change	weak
<p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ developing a shared vision, values and aims relevant to the school and its community</li><li>■ strategic planning for continuous improvement</li><li>■ implementing improvement and change</li></ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ During her short time in post, the acting headteacher has introduced many new and important approaches to support improvement. Whilst these are beginning to have a positive influence on aspects of the school's work, there has been insufficient time to demonstrate impact. The acting headteacher and staff need to balance refining and embedding fully new approaches whilst ensuring continued momentum towards agreed priorities for improvement. It is essential that the acting headteacher, with ongoing support from the local authority, monitors closely the pace of developments. The local authority needs to ensure that new approaches to leadership of change in the school are effective, sustained over time and lead to improved outcomes for all children.</li><li>■ The school has a warm, welcoming and nurturing ethos. It is at the centre of the local community and all staff have a sound understanding of the socio-economic context of the school. The school values of motivated, opportunities, skills, supportive, inclusive and encouraging (MOSSIE) are evident in all aspects of the school's work. The pupil council leads whole school reviews of the values and suggest amendments as required. Almost all children are knowledgeable about the school's vision and values and explain how they translate into their own lives.</li><li>■ Staff, children and families work very well together and treat each other with respect. Together they value each other as members of the school community. All teachers and support assistants believe that collaborative working is now supporting improvement across the school. Almost all parents and children feel comfortable to express their views and suggestions about the school. Most parents, and almost all children, feel that their opinions are taken into account.</li><li>■ All staff know the school very well. They are reflective and demonstrate a clear commitment to making improvements. The acting headteacher has recently introduced a systematic</li></ul>	

approach to evaluating the work of the school. Teachers are at the very early stages of engaging meaningfully with How Good is Our School (4<sup>th</sup> edition). Under the direction of the acting headteacher, they are starting to develop their understanding of the quality indicators. This is beginning to help them to assess strengths and areas for development more accurately.

- The acting headteacher has recently developed and introduced an annual quality assurance calendar that details a range of activities to support self-evaluation. Whilst this is at a very early stage of implementation, it is beginning to support change and improvement across the school. The acting headteacher has completed one round of class visits to date. These newly introduced learning observations have been warmly welcomed by teachers. They feel that the feedback provided by the acting headteacher supports well their professional development. Moving forward, the acting headteacher should ensure that the focus for quality assurance activities is more specific and based on identified improvement priorities. This will help to ensure that the information gathered is more meaningful and identifies clearly the areas of strength and improvement needs. The acting headteacher should ensure that feedback to staff is more robust and highlights individual and collective next steps for improvement.
- Under the direction of the acting headteacher, all teachers and support staff now take on leadership roles linked to school improvement. They facilitate pupil committees and lead a range of clubs, providing valuable experiences for the children. Teachers also lead and contribute to the development of the curriculum. For example, individual teachers work on areas such as developing approaches to teaching children about meta skills and developing the religious and moral education curriculum. This work is beginning to have a positive impact on children's learning experiences and is starting to develop leadership capacity across the school. The acting headteacher should now consider how to build on this positive start and link teacher leadership opportunities more closely with the identified school improvement priorities.
- All staff are keen to engage more fully in career long professional learning. All teachers undertook a professional enquiry within their Associated Schools Group (ASG) which directly influenced the development of the school's new approach to promoting positive relationships. The acting headteacher recognises the need to support staff to implement new approaches to learning through play. To begin to address this, she has initiated contact with another establishment to learn more about play pedagogy. Support staff would welcome more professional learning to help them assist children with specific learning needs.
- The Parent Council is highly supportive of the school. Almost all parents report that they are encouraged to be involved in the Parent Council and that they are kept informed about the work of this group. The Parent Council welcomes their increasing opportunities to contribute to whole school improvement planning. The acting headteacher seeks their views on current developments, such as the draft positive relationships policy. This is helping to develop the Parent Council's role in leading change within the school.
- As of the start of the current school session, the acting headteacher has ensured that all children in the school are members of a pupil leadership group. These include the Global Goals committee and the Rota Kids. Several of these groups are newly created and are at the very early stages of establishing roles and remits. They have, however, had weekly meetings and most have clear and suitably detailed action plans in place to support their work. Existing groups, such as the pupil council, feel that they now have increased opportunities to make suggestions and improve aspects of the school. Children articulate clearly the responsibilities of the groups and link them to the school values and their rights. They identify the skills they are developing as a result of their involvement. These groups are

very well placed to continue to expand their remits and instigate meaningful improvements in many aspects of the life of the school, including learning and teaching.

- The school has a small allocation of Pupil Equity Funding (PEF). All staff agreed that this funding would be used to provide additional support for children in all three classes, including those pupils who are eligible for PEF funding. The acting headteacher should ensure that the impact of this support is monitored carefully. This will help staff to evidence the extent to which the additional funding is helping to close poverty related attainment gaps within the school. The acting headteacher should also ensure that parents and children are consulted about the use of PEF.

## 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

- All staff know children and their families very well. They demonstrate a clear commitment to children's wellbeing and place a high priority on working with parents and partners to improve outcomes for children. The staff and children have developed class charters which are underpinned by children's rights and the school values. These charters help children to understand their role in creating a positive learning environment. Children benefit from nurturing relationships with staff across the school, who encourage and support them well. As a result, most children are engaged and interact successfully during learning. Relationships and behaviour are positive.
- In most lessons, teachers provide clear and helpful explanations and instructions. Almost all teachers share the purpose of learning and set appropriate measures of success for children. In a few lessons, teachers co-construct the steps to success with children. This helps children to know how to make progress in their learning. Most teachers use questioning well to elicit information and to check children's understanding. As a next step, teachers should now use questioning more effectively to support children to extend and deepen their learning.
- Most teachers provide a range of activities that match children's abilities. In a few lessons, children have choice in their learning that provides sufficient challenge. Most children engage well in lessons and work well both independently and in pairs. A few children become disengaged when lessons are overly teacher-led. Teachers should now develop opportunities for children to develop higher order thinking skills and creativity through regular active learning opportunities. Across the curriculum, children need more opportunities to lead and take increasing responsibility for aspects of their own learning.
- All staff know their children well and are aware of any barriers to learning that they may face. Children who have additional support needs are supported appropriately in class by teachers and by skilled support staff.
- All teachers use digital technology, such as interactive screens, successfully to support class lessons. Children use digital devices to play games to reinforce learning, undertake research and for word processing. Teachers should develop a progressive approach to developing children's digital skills to enhance their learning across the curriculum.
- Children at the early stages require more opportunities to learn through quality play experiences. The acting headteacher should support staff to engage with national practice guidance. This should inform their review of learning environments, the role of the adults and the range of play experiences provided. As identified by the acting headteacher, staff would benefit from visiting other establishments where high-quality, play-based learning is well-established. Staff need to develop an agreed and well understood rationale for play. This will

support the development of progressive and developmentally appropriate play across early, first and second level.

- There are regular opportunities for children to work across stages. These include physical activity sessions, buddy activities and house challenges. This approach is providing all children with an opportunity to further develop their communication and collaboration skills across the whole school community. It also supports older children to develop leadership skills in a range of real-life contexts. Teachers should now consider how these activities link explicitly to the curriculum and support children's progression in learning across the curriculum.
- Individual staff use a range of summative, formative and standardised assessments. They use diagnostic assessments well to inform interventions and plan next steps for identified children. As planned, the acting headteacher should now work with staff to develop a whole school assessment calendar. This will support staff to carry out planned assessments at agreed times across the academic session. It will also support consistency of approach and provide more robust evidence to underpin teachers' professional judgement about children's progress and attainment.
- Most teachers provide praise and helpful verbal feedback to support children in a variety of ways. They now need to develop further the use of written feedback to support children to identify their progress and next steps. Children use formative self-assessment strategies in most lessons. The quality of this is not of a consistently high standard. To help children identify accurately their next steps, teachers now need to support children to reflect carefully on the criteria for success when evaluating their learning.
- Teacher's plan using a variety of progression frameworks and prepare termly planning overviews that are shared with parents. The acting headteacher should now review the use of this range of progression frameworks. There is a need to develop a more consistent approach to planning learning across the school. Teachers should ensure that assessment is integral to the planning process.
- Teachers record information about children's progress through Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels using a local authority tracking system. Teachers would welcome opportunities to formally discuss children's progress in depth and review assessment evidence together prior to entering attainment data on the tracker. This would help to ensure that tracking information is robust and reliable. The acting headteacher has included tracking and monitoring meetings on the newly developed quality assurance calendar.
- The acting headteacher has initiated links with other schools to plan moderation in listening and talking. Teachers need to have more planned opportunities to moderate with colleagues in school and across their ASG. This should include moderation of all aspects of the learning, teaching and assessment cycle.

## 2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- Teachers use a range of frameworks to support their planning in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. They are developing a framework for RME. The acting headteacher now needs to review and improve approaches to planning. Teachers need to plan for all curricular areas using a consistent format that helps to ensure that children build effectively on their prior learning.
- The school uses a three year rolling programme curriculum model to take account of the learning needs of multi-stage classes. The acting headteacher and staff should ensure that full consideration is given to the four contexts of learning and design principles as identified in CfE. The curriculum should also reflect more fully the local community and provide learning experiences that offer opportunities for increased creativity.
- The acting headteacher and teachers must ensure that all children receive their full entitlement to a broad and balanced curriculum. They need to maximise all teaching time available during the week and ensure that class timetables clearly identify the curricular focus of all activities.
- All children learn French and British Sign Language. All children do not currently receive their full entitlement to two hours of high-quality physical education each week.

## 2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- The acting headteacher has introduced detailed termly whole school newsletters which provide parents with a helpful overview of current and planned events and initiatives. Almost all parents and carers appreciate the frequency and detail of digital communications which provide a balanced picture of their own child's progress and next steps. Parents would welcome further opportunities to learn more alongside their children in school.
- Parents, volunteers, local authority staff and partner agencies provide a range of valuable opportunities that enhance the wider curriculum. These include volunteering, community events and expressive arts opportunities in music, dance and drama. The acting headteacher should now consider developing approaches to evaluating the impact of partnership working upon planned outcomes for learners. This would support tracking of children's extra-curricular opportunities and wider achievements.



## 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

- Children across the school demonstrate a sound understanding of health and wellbeing. They have regular opportunities to reflect on and self-evaluate their own wellbeing. The acting headteacher responds effectively to any individual or collective issues that arise through this process. Children feel cared for, respected and included in all aspects of the life of the school.
- Children have regular opportunities to access an appropriate range of texts that promote diversity and inclusivity. Staff also ensure that these concepts are discussed during assemblies. As a result, children have a well-developed understanding of these important issues related to wellbeing, equality and inclusion.
- The school assembly programme is planned to cover an important range of wellbeing issues. The health and wellbeing curriculum covers all key aspects of wellbeing across a three-year programme and links clearly to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and CfE experiences and outcomes. Staff make relevant links to children's rights, the four capacities and the wellbeing indicators during these assemblies and within class activities. As a result of all of these approaches, children are developing well their knowledge, skills and understanding of an important range of topics. They can relate these to their own lives at home and in school.
- Children have access to an extensive and well-resourced outdoor environment. They enjoy developing and using the range of areas such as the school garden, the playing fields and the local woods. Staff should now develop a planned and progressive approach to using the outdoor environment to help children to learn about nature and apply a range of skills within this context. This would help children to benefit from the full learning potential of their local physical environment.
- Children have lots of space and encouragement to develop well their physical skills and abilities during break times and planned activity sessions. Almost all children feel that the school helps them to lead a healthy lifestyle and take regular exercise.
- All staff use a shared and successful approach to promoting positive behaviour. They are calm, sensitive and nurturing in their interactions with children and are positive role models. Staff prioritise and establish respectful relationships and ensure that they are fair and consistent when managing any instances of conflict in the classroom or playground. Much of this work stems from professional learning and enquiries on restorative approaches. Almost all children and parents feel that pupils are treated fairly and with respect. Almost all children report that they have never experienced bullying behaviour. As a result of these successful approaches, the standard of behaviour across the school is very high with very few

instances of low level disruptive behaviour. Staff have initiated work on promoting a positive relationships policy and have consulted with children and the Parent Council during its development. The acting headteacher should now ensure that all members of the school community have opportunities to be involved in evaluating the policy, before embedding it fully across the school.

- Staff plan well for transitions into P1 and S1 and across stages within the school. The buddy programme has recently been extended to include all year groups and children are supported well as they move between stages. Staff consider carefully the composition of mixed stage class, taking the academic and wellbeing needs of children into account. The school continues to welcome new children through the academic year and all children and parents feel they are well supported during this process. Parents and staff report that children are confident and well prepared when moving on to secondary school from a small rural school, as a direct result of the effective arrangements for transition.
- The acting headteacher and staff are knowledgeable about the range of learning needs across the school. Children who require additional support for aspects of their learning have appropriate learning plans that identify individual needs. Teachers, parents and children have opportunities to contribute to these plans. Moving forward, the acting headteacher should ensure that all plans are reviewed on an appropriate basis depending on the level of pupil need. The acting headteacher and staff should identify clearly the progress made by children against measurable outcomes.
- The acting headteacher and staff fulfil their statutory duties in relation to monitoring attendance, planning for children who require additional support and keeping children safe. The acting headteacher has identified correctly the need for staff to engage in targeted professional learning about statutory duties, and associated local authority processes, as appropriate to their role.

### 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

- Across the school, a majority of children achieve expected levels of attainment in reading and writing. Most children achieve expected levels of attainment in numeracy and talking and listening. A few children across all stages are exceeding expectations in both literacy and numeracy. To help children make the best possible progress in their learning, they require greater challenge and more opportunities to apply their learning in a range of contexts.
- Children with additional support needs are making appropriate progress relative to their individual needs. The acting headteacher should develop the use of further assessment information to help staff capture the incremental steps in children's progress.

#### Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, most children are making satisfactory progress in literacy and English.

#### Listening and talking

- Children who have achieved early level listen well to everyday instructions and prompts. They respond appropriately and share their ideas. Children who have achieved first level ask and answer questions to clarify and share understanding. Children who are on track to achieve second level express their opinions with confidence and ask and answer a range of questions. They use appropriate eye contact and recognise the importance of tone. A minority of children across the school become disengaged when listening as a whole class.

#### Reading

- Children enjoy regularly visiting the school library to read for pleasure. Almost all children speak positively about these opportunities.
- Children who have achieved early level use their knowledge of sounds letters and patterns to read words. They read familiar texts aloud with attention to punctuation. Children who have achieved first level read with expression and understanding. They explain why they like a book or genre and understand the differences between fact and opinion. They identify key features of non-fiction texts. Children who are on track to achieve second level use a range of reading strategies to demonstrate understanding and analysis of texts. They need to develop further their understanding of literal and evaluative questions.

#### Writing

- The acting headteacher should ensure there is a more effective and consistent approach to the teaching of writing across the school. This would help children to develop their writing skills and improve their attainment. It would also provide greater evidence of skills development and support professional judgement of appropriate working level.

- Children who have achieved early level form lowercase letters legibly. They need further support to form all letters correctly and to use a capital letter and full stop in at least one sentence. At first and second levels, children need support to write for a range of purposes and audiences. They need to develop their skills in writing across different genres.

### **Attainment in numeracy and mathematics**

- Overall, most children are making satisfactory progress in numeracy and mathematics.

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

- Children who have achieved early level recognise and form numbers with accuracy. They are confident to count on from a given number, complete addition and subtraction calculations within 20 and identify odd and even numbers. They require more support to work out change and match daily events to times. Children who have achieved first level estimate amounts, solve two-step problems and order fractions. They convert units of money, length and time. They need support to complete mental calculations with greater speed and accuracy and to solve problems that involve money. Children who are on track to achieve second level have a sound knowledge of place value and fractions. They calculate profit, understand negative numbers and solve problems involving time, speed and distance. They are confident to complete written and mental calculations involving multiplication but require more practice in dividing larger numbers.

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

- Children who have achieved early level make patterns with shapes and colours. They understand prepositional language and name common two-dimensional (2D) shapes. They need to develop further their understanding of a wider range of three-dimensional (3D) objects. Children who have achieved first level draw shapes with two lines of symmetry and recognise different types of angles. They use grid references and name properties of 3D objects. Children who are on track to achieve second level identify compass points and an appropriate range of 2D shapes and 3D objects. They are less confident when drawing nets.

### **Information handling**

- Children who have achieved early level sort items for a given criteria and can suggest ways of classifying objects. Children who have achieved first level identify ways of collecting information in real-life contexts and suggest how information might be presented. They need more opportunities to create and answer questions about data. Children who are on track to achieve second level interpret information from a pie chart and use the data provided to complete the chart and answer associated questions. They understand the purpose of spreadsheets and give examples of when these are used in different contexts.

### **Attainment over time**

- The acting headteacher needs to work with staff to ensure that all professional judgements about children's attainment in literacy and numeracy are increasingly reliable. Staff should use a wider range of robust assessment evidence which is clearly aligned to national Benchmarks. This should help to ensure that attainment data accurately reflects all children's progress across and within CfE levels. Staff do not yet track children's progress in curricular areas other than literacy and numeracy
- The school's attendance figures remain consistently above 95%. This is above the local authority and national average. The acting headteacher and staff track attendance carefully and take prompt action to address any concerns identified. The school has recently adopted the local authority's attendance policy and staff follow the formal review procedures. The acting headteacher has taken steps to inform parents about the potential impact of low

attendance on learning. Staff should now ensure that all parents are aware of the school's new approaches to managing pupil absence.

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

- Staff lead or support a range of extra-curricular clubs and almost all children benefit from these activities. Children speak positively about these opportunities and the skills they are developing as a result of their participation. A few children now lead their own lunch time clubs in art, knitting and crochet for peers. This is helping to develop further their planning, organisational and leadership skills.
- Staff regularly celebrate children's achievements in school and in the wider community through assemblies and displays. Most children can talk about their achievements in relation to their learning and the skills they are developing. Achievement awards and recognitions are linked to the school's vision, values, and aims, children's rights and the four capacities. Staff should continue to develop their newly introduced approaches to tracking children's wider achievements and associated skills. This will enhance further the quality of evidence available to support professional judgement of children's overall progress.

### **Equity for all learners**

- The acting headteacher and school staff know children well. They have a strong understanding of the socio-economic background of children and their families, and the impact of barriers to learning that they may face. Staff intervene sensitively to ensure that financial constraints do not prevent any children from taking part in school life. The Parent Council supports all families with reducing the cost of the school day by subsidising school trips. These approaches are helping to ensure equity for all.
- Staff use the school's PEF allocation to support the raising attainment strategy for literacy and numeracy and to improve health and wellbeing. They have increased staffing and purchased additional resources. This universal approach has positively impacted on children's engagement and self-esteem. The acting headteacher and staff should now ensure that additional funding is also used to accelerate learning and close poverty related attainment gaps across the school. The acting headteacher should strengthen further approaches to gathering evidence on the impact of PEF on raising attainment for identified 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.