Summarised inspection findings

Pirnmill Primary School

North Ayrshire Council

27 August 2024

Key contextual information

Pirnmill Primary School is a non-denominational school located in a rural location on the Isle of Arran. At the time of the inspection, the roll was 10 children across all year groups apart from primary six. The school is part of a six school cluster approach, previously overseen by one headteacher. The post of headteacher for six schools is currently being advertised by North Ayrshire Council. The school is within the Arran High School cluster. Most children live in the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) data zones 7 and 8. School attendance is above the national average. The acting headteacher, acting depute headteacher and acting principal teacher took up posts in August 2023. The current class teacher is full time due to staff absence.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment	weak
This indicator focuses on ensuring high-quality learning experiences for all children and young people. It highlights the importance of highly-skilled staff who work with children, young people and others to ensure learning is motivating and meaningful. Effective use of assessment by staff and learners ensures children and young people maximise their successes and achievements. The themes are: ■ learning and engagement ■ quality of teaching ■ effective use of assessment ■ planning, tracking and monitoring	

■ All staff develop positive and supportive relationships with children. All staff exhibit the school's values of supportive, belonging and kindness. This creates an environment where children feel they are part of a 'close knit' group. Children are keen and eager to learn. Most children engage appropriately in their learning where learning is presented in contexts that interest them. Children enjoy opportunities to learn both on their own and with their peers, in pairs or groups. Senior leaders plan to share a draft positive relationships policy to ensure consistency of approaches to nurture, restorative approaches and reflect local authority work.

■ Staff are at the early stages of developing play-based learning. They have introduced resources to provide improved opportunities for learning through play. Children are beginning to experiment, discover and solve problems in creative ways. Staff should continue to engage in professional learning, refer to national guidance and explore further the role of the adult in supporting learning through play.

■ Staff provide clear instructions and explanations. They share learning intentions and an outline of tasks and activities with children at the start of each lesson. The majority of children are clear about the purpose of the activity. Most children talk about what they are doing but not consistently about what they are learning. Teachers need to work with children to identify appropriate success criteria. This should support children's understanding of what they need to do to improve and if they have been successful in their learning. Teachers need to develop how they provide children with increased opportunities to take greater ownership, and lead their own learning. Most lessons are not differentiated sufficiently well to provide all children with appropriate levels of pace and challenge. Teachers need to develop how they plan learning which builds progressively on what children can already do and how they apply this learning. As planned, senior leaders should work with staff to co-create a learning and teaching guide. This should support staff further to more effectively meet children's needs.

- Staff are committed to using the unique outdoor spaces near the school to enhance children's learning. Senior leaders and staff should develop further their understanding and use of outdoor learning to develop children's skills. Currently, children experience activities outside which do not always support and extend planned learning started within the classroom.

- Children use digital technology in a variety of contexts to support their learning. Older children access laptops in classrooms to carry out research, for example finding out about how animals use materials. All children use tablets to photograph and upload examples of their learning experiences to an online platform. They access resources and games to consolidate their learning in numeracy and evaluate their learning in reading.

- Senior leaders and staff use a new reporting format to share learning and targets with parents and carers. Most children are increasingly involved in self-assessment, but this is at the early stages. Staff use an online communication tool regularly to share learning experiences with parents and carers. This is not yet being used effectively to evidence assessment and track children's progress in their learning.

- Teachers observe children well during teaching and intervene appropriately to provide further instruction or clarification. Teachers use verbal and written feedback increasingly well to support children's progress in their learning. As planned and building upon recent professional learning, senior leaders should monitor the consistent and effective use of feedback. This should include the use of feedback to help children identify their next steps in learning. Teachers use questioning techniques effectively to explore children's thinking. They should keep under review the use and blend of questioning to extend children's thinking and deepen their understanding.

- Teachers engage in moderation. This is beginning to build their confidence and accuracy when making professional judgements and providing targeted interventions and support for all children. The focus this session has been on writing with a focus on numeracy planned for next year. Senior leaders plan to extend opportunities for moderation to develop further teacher's understanding of national standards through the use of national Benchmarks.

- Teachers use a range of standardised assessments to measure children's progress in literacy, numeracy and mathematics. An annual assessment calendar is in place. However, there is a lack of consistency in the use of assessments to support teachers' professional judgements across the school. As planned, senior leaders should develop at pace, a consistent, whole-school approach to assessing children's progress. This needs to ensure assessment approaches are integral to planning. In addition, it should ensure a more consistent approach to how formative and summative assessments are used to support more accurate judgements of children's progress.

- Children are supported at key points of change and transition through effective and positive work with partners. For example, an Area Inclusion Worker supports children with visits to other primary schools and the cluster secondary school. Senior leaders share wellbeing information with secondary teachers before their move to Arran High School.

- Teachers plan learning over a variety of timescales including learning across the curriculum. They increasingly take children's prior learning into account when planning learning across different subject areas. Children share what they already know and what they would like to learn. Teachers use progression frameworks for literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics to inform planning. They record children's progress in numeracy and mathematics and plans are in place to use an updated writing framework next session. Senior leaders meet with teachers to discuss and give feedback on planning including suggestions on how to adapt

learning and teaching approaches. Staff are involved in the staged intervention processes to create child's plans. Senior leaders and staff need to improve planning for individual children linked to planned assessment to more effectively meet children's needs.

■ Senior leaders and teachers gather data on children's attainment in literacy, numeracy and mathematics. Senior leaders analyse information from summative assessments and professional judgements and are supporting teachers to use this data. There now needs to be more systematic and strategic approaches to track the progress and attainment of individual children, identified groups and cohorts. Senior leaders should share with staff a newly developed individualised 'attainment over time tracker' to inform planning and monitor children's progress closely. They need to ensure all children make better progress in their learning, including those who require more challenge. Children and staff will benefit from planned learning conversations to enable children to play a much fuller role in understanding and leading their learning.

2.1 Safeguarding and child protection

■ The school submitted self-evaluation information related to child protection and safeguarding. Inspectors discussed this information with relevant staff and, where appropriate, children. In addition, inspectors examined a sample of safeguarding documentation. Areas for development have been agreed with the school and the education authority that need to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

3.2 Raising attainment and achievement	weak

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 on the school roll and the risk of identifying individual children, attainment and progress will be expressed in 'overall' statements, rather than for specific year groups.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, children make insufficient progress from their prior levels of attainment in literacy and English.

Listening and talking

- The majority of children listen well to their teachers and follow instructions. A minority of children become disengaged when listening as a whole class. The majority of children working towards first and second level are eager to talk about their tasks and confidently talk to visitors and their peers. Older children would benefit from taking part in debates about topical issues or subjects that interest them. This should develop further their ability to share their views and opinions and listen attentively to others.

Reading

- Younger children increasingly recognise initial sounds and simple blends. They are building confidence in reading common words. Most children enjoy reading books and this has been supported by an increasing number of fiction and non-fiction books in the school library. The majority of older children explain their preferences for texts and authors. The majority of children read with increasing fluency and a few use expression well. Children at first and second level are developing their ability to answer inferential and evaluative questions about familiar texts. Children are at the early stages of identifying techniques authors use to engage readers, for example, word choice and emotive language. Across the school, children should be given greater opportunities to choose texts including non-fiction for their own personal reading.

Writing

- A few younger children are beginning to understand that writing has meaning. Children at all stages have a basic understanding of grammar and punctuation and have personal targets for improving these aspects of their writing. Most children are developing their ability to discuss the different features of writing genres. Children across first and second level need further opportunities to write extended pieces of writing. They would benefit from having more frequent opportunities to develop their writing skills across the curriculum. This should be at a level appropriate to their ability and for a variety of purposes linked to real and meaningful contexts.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, children make insufficient progress from their prior levels of attainment in numeracy and mathematics.

Number, money and measure

- Most of the youngest children recognise and use numbers from 0 to 10. The majority are developing their recognition of numbers beyond 10. Older children can add and subtract three-digit numbers successfully. The majority of children are confident using place value. Most children are aware of multiplication and division at their stage of learning and regularly practise times tables. Across all stages, children should develop further their application of numeracy and mathematical skills, knowledge and strategies using real life contexts. This should improve children's application of their knowledge and consolidate their learning. Across the school, most children would benefit from more opportunities to develop their mental mathematics and problem solving skills and strategies. This would support them to consolidate learning on money, profit and loss and apply addition and subtraction skills to work out amounts.

Shape, position and movement

- Younger children identify two-dimensional shapes. A few recognise symmetry within simple shapes and would benefit from further opportunity to explore them through play. Overall, most children recognise, identify and name three-dimensional (3D) objects. The majority of older children need to develop further their knowledge of a variety of angles including right, obtuse and acute angles. Older children would now benefit from more opportunities to explore scale and interpret simple models, maps and plans.

Information handling

- Across all stages all staff need to plan for further learning opportunities for children to develop their skills and knowledge of information handling. Children need a greater experience of how data can be recorded, including using digital technologies.

Attainment over time

- Senior leaders and teachers track the attainment and progress of children in literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics. Senior leaders have correctly identified that current processes and systems do not provide a reliable and clear picture of individual children's attainment over time. They are reviewing their systems to ensure rigour in analysing data for individuals, groups and cohorts. This should support the more effective and accurate identification of trends in children's progress and attainment over time. This should include the identification of effective universal and targeted interventions. Children with additional support needs should make better progress towards identified gaps or dips in attainment.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- The majority of children are involved in sports events or activities organised by Active Schools Scotland who share data about participation and skills learned with school staff. As a result, children are more aware of how to be healthy and improve their fitness. In addition, children attend music tuition and are effectively supported by staff to attend activities, competitions and clubs across the island. A few children achieve leadership skills, such as responsibility and care for others, through supporting younger children. Children use enterprise, business, performance and team-working skills. For example, by participating in school concerts and other events in the local community, including the monthly 'Eco Savvy Café' in the village hall.

- Senior leaders and staff celebrate children's successes and achievements during school assemblies. Children across the school receive certificates and rosettes linked to their participation in a range of clubs and activities. They also link achievements to the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) four capacities and the school values. Children value sharing their

achievements from outwith school with staff and enjoy receiving positive feedback. They are not yet clear about how their achievements link to the four capacities, the values and skills for learning, life and work.

■ Senior leaders should build on systems to record children's achievements. These systems will help identify any children who are at risk of missing out on opportunities. Children would benefit from making links to skills for learning, life and work. This will help to ensure they see the value of their achievements and how they contribute to their learning. Parents and carers could be further encouraged to use the online communication platform to share achievements from home and discuss their importance and contribution to children's overall learning.

Equity for all learners
■ Staff reduce the cost of the school day by providing opportunities for all children free of charge. These include all trips, swimming lessons, travel, snack and uniform when required.

■ Senior leaders are using Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) to purchase resources to increase attainment and enjoyment in daily reading for all children. Senior leaders and staff monitor the impact of this resource on children's attainment. In addition, PEF has been spent on playground markings. It will be important to review the impact this resource has on identified cohorts and individual children and determine how successful they have been in addressing the poverty-related attainment gap. Senior leaders inform parents and children what PEF is spent on. It will be important to ensure parents and children are clear about how their views influence the PEF allocation and how it improves attainment.

■ The acting headteacher monitors attendance on a monthly basis. The school does not experience issues relating to attendance but percentages are affected due to the small school roll. The acting headteacher and acting depute headteacher contacts families when a child's attendance dips below 90%. The school share North Ayrshire Council approaches to attendance with parents. The attendance figures for the school are above the national average.

Other relevant evidence

- Staff have focused on developing a positive, nurturing and caring ethos across the school. They work effectively together to create an environment that encourages respect and promotes positive relationships. Staff develop very positive relationships with children and their families. These approaches are summarised in a draft Promoting Positive Relationships policy. This is in the early stages of being shared across the whole school community. North Ayrshire Council have a Promoting Positive Relationships (PPR) overview summarising their expectations for whole school nurture and mental health and wellbeing approaches. This outlines key priorities for session 2023/24 and links to professional learning, training, staff wellbeing and curriculum support. In addition, the local authority has been undertaking a Supporting Needs review since 2020 and this implements the recommendations of the Morgan Review through a range of workstreams. The refreshed corporate policy on Violence and Aggression has been devised in collaboration with teaching unions, corporate health and safety and the Joint Consultative Committee. A new reporting system introduced in October 2023 identify any areas where incidents are high and link with establishments to ensure appropriate action is being taken. The local authority report an expansion of parent groups and school approaches to Building on Positive Relationships (BPR) based on the principles of Non Violent Resistance (NVR).

- The school has a well-resourced library. This supports children's enjoyment of reading.

- Children receive their entitlement of two hours of quality PE each week.

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.