

Summarised inspection findings

Fettercairn Primary School

Aberdeenshire Council

12 September 2023

Key contextual information

Fettercairn Primary School and Nursery Class serves the Mearns Village of Fettercairn and surrounding rural area. The headteacher has been in post for 13 years and has a shared headship with Luthermuir Primary School. The headteacher is supported by a principal teacher and an Early Years Senior Practitioner. The school roll is 84 children in the primary and 25 children who attend the nursery. There are four composite classes in the primary.

Almost all children live in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) data zones 6 and 7. The remaining children live in SIMD data zones 9 and 10. Children's attendance at the school is in line with the national average.

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

- Staff and children enjoy positive and mutually respectful relationships. Staff create a warm and welcoming ethos. Children are friendly, polite and respectful. They demonstrate care and consideration in their interaction with others. Staff foster a calm learning environment.
- A majority of teachers have established well-organised classrooms. Most children are attentive and participate well in their learning. In most classes teachers provide clear explanations and instructions. When children work together in pairs and groups, they support each other well. Teachers need to plan more regular opportunities for children to work in this way.
- Children are beginning to develop an awareness of their rights through recent assembly inputs and in class. However, staff are at the early stages of developing a shared appreciation of children's rights across the school. Teachers should now link children's rights more readily to classroom and school activities. Children need more opportunity to learn about children's rights in real-life and relevant contexts. This will help to develop further their understanding of rights.
- In most classes, children receive planned learning delivered by different teachers across the week. The quality of teaching and the consistency of most children's experiences are currently too variable within classes and across the school. There is a need for senior leaders to support staff to develop shared expectations and standards of what children can achieve. Staff should work together to agree and embed the features of high-quality learning and teaching. It will be important to involve the wider school community in this work. Staff would benefit from exploring research, sharing good practice, and engaging in well-constructed professional learning.
- Children are motivated in a few lessons where learning is appropriately challenging, varied, and matched to their needs. However most children are regularly passive in their learning. Teachers should continue to develop their use of creative and relevant contexts for learning. This includes children having more opportunities to lead aspects of their learning, and

increasing use of digital technology, to enrich their learning. Children in early primary would benefit from regular opportunities for play-based learning, which is at a very early stage of development. Children's learning is too often overly teacher directed. This results in children doing the same activities and learning at the same pace. Teachers should improve the pace and challenge of learning to improve children's engagement. They should have higher expectations of children to ensure they achieve to their full potential.

- In a minority of lessons, children talk confidently about the purpose of learning. In these lessons, teachers discuss effectively with children what they are expected to learn and what successful learning looks like. In a few lessons, teachers encourage children to co-construct their success criteria. There is scope to share and develop this practice across the school. A majority of teachers need to ensure success criteria relates to learning and not simply completing tasks. Teachers and children should review more systematically how well the purpose of learning is met.
- In a majority of lessons, teachers use questioning well to check for children's understanding. Most children respond enthusiastically to direct questions and answer confidently. Almost all teachers should now develop further their use of questioning. They should support all children to use their higher order thinking skills and to think more deeply about their learning. Most teachers offer children praise-based feedback on their learning. In a few lessons, teachers encourage children to provide feedback on their peers' work. Senior leaders and staff should develop their approaches to providing high-quality feedback to children. This will ensure all children understand what they need to do to improve and identify their next steps in learning.
- Staff are beginning to explore outdoor learning opportunities for children. However, this only extends currently to staff taking classroom activities outdoors. Senior leaders identify that they should consider how to use the natural environment surrounding the school better to promote children's curiosity and discovery.
- Teachers use appropriate assessment data to support their professional judgements of children's progress in learning. This includes a range of assessments for literacy and numeracy, including national standardised assessments. Teachers have completed professional learning recently to refresh their understanding of formative assessment strategies. Senior leaders should continue to support teachers to embed the use of formative assessment across the school. Teachers should consider how they adapt their teaching following assessments to ensure all children can progress in their learning.
- Teachers engaged recently in helpful moderation activity with other schools in the local area. This is helping to support teacher professional judgements. Senior leaders should ensure these activities happen regularly, with colleagues in and out with the school. Teachers should develop an improved understanding of the moderation cycle and use this to inform planning for learning, teaching and assessment
- Senior leaders have appropriately updated approaches to planning learning and teaching this year. These plans are stored digitally and are helpfully accessible by all staff. This is supporting staff to plan learning together. The agreed planning format links learning to experiences and outcomes well. Senior leaders and staff should now evaluate fully the effectiveness of planning and its impact on children's progress. Children would benefit from more involvement in planning learning. This will help them be more active participants in their learning.
- Senior leaders track children's progress in literacy and numeracy well. They have regular tracking meetings with all teachers. Staff focus on identifying and discussing children who are below national expectations for their stage. Teachers should develop their use of data when

reviewing children's progress. This will ensure teachers are confident in using evidence consistently to demonstrate children's progress with their learning. Senior leaders and teachers should also use tracking meetings to review the progress of children who are exceeding expectations more effectively. Teachers need to plan learning experiences which offer greater challenge and depth of learning for these children.

2.1 Safeguarding and child protection

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

3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

satisfactory

This indicator focuses on the school's success in achieving the best possible outcomes for all learners. Success is measured in attainment across all areas of the curriculum and through the school's ability to demonstrate learners' achievements in relation to skills and attributes. Continuous improvement or sustained high standards over time is a key feature of this indicator. The themes are:

- attainment in literacy and numeracy
- attainment over time
- overall quality of learners' achievement
- equity for all learners

Attainment in literacy and numeracy

- Overall, children's attainment in literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics is satisfactory. Data presented by the school demonstrates that in June 2023, most children achieved appropriate Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels in listening and talking, reading and numeracy. A majority of children achieved CfE levels in writing.
- A few children who require additional support in their learning make satisfactory progress towards appropriate levels of literacy and numeracy. Children requiring additional support with their learning would benefit from teachers setting specific, relevant and measurable learning targets. This will help demonstrate their individual progress in learning.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, children are making satisfactory progress in literacy and English. At early level, most children attain expected CfE levels in reading and writing. A majority of children at early level attain expected CfE levels in listening and talking. At first level, a majority of children attain expected CfE levels in reading and listening and talking. A minority of children at first level attain expected CfE levels in writing. At second level, all children attain expected CfE levels in listening and talking. Most children at second level attain expected CfE levels in reading. A majority at second level attain expected CfE levels in writing.

Listening and talking

- At early level, most children can hear and say the different sounds made by letters. A majority of children need to develop their turn-taking skills. At first level, a majority of children demonstrate their understanding of the difference between fact and opinion confidently. At second level, children answer literal and inferential questions confidently and explain their thinking well. At first and second level, most children are not yet confident in using appropriate techniques to engage others. They require more regular opportunities to present to an audience.

Reading

- At early level, most children can recall the content of books and engage in discussion to try to predict what happens next. They now need to increase the pace of learning initial sounds. At first level, a majority of children can share their thoughts on the writer's use of structure, setting and characters. At second level, children demonstrate effectively reading skills such as skimming, scanning and predicting. Children at the first and second level need to develop further their higher order reading skills using text appropriate to their level of ability.

Writing

- There is a significant need to improve children's writing skills across the school as a key area of improvement.
- At early level, most children are learning to form letters correctly. These children need to develop their ability to invent their own stories and share them in imaginative ways. At first level, a majority of children demonstrate an understanding of the features and approaches used in persuasive writing. These children need to improve their spelling and punctuation. At second level, most children write creatively to produce imaginative stories. A majority of children at second level, use paragraphs increasingly accurately to separate thoughts and ideas. A majority of children at first and second level should develop their ability to increase the length and content of their writing. Children at first and second level require increased feedback to improve their writing and specific, measurable targets.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, children are making satisfactory progress with numeracy and mathematics. At early level, most children attain expected CfE levels in numeracy. At first level, a majority of children attain expected CfE levels in numeracy. At second level, all children attain expected CfE levels in numeracy.

Number, money and measure

- At early level, most children can order numbers to 20 and identify the number before and after. They need to extend their knowledge of numbers beyond 20 when counting. At first level, a majority of children are confident when counting forwards and backwards in 2s, 5s, 10s and 100s. They need to develop their ability to identify and discuss strategies used for calculations. At second level, almost all children can simplify fractions and find a fraction of a whole number. They need more practice to identify accurately equivalent fractions when given a percentage, a fraction or a decimal. All children would benefit from regular practice in mental agility activities.

Shape, position and movement

- At early level, all children identify and describe the properties of two-dimensional shapes. They are less confident when discuss three-dimensional shapes. At first level, most children can identify a right angle and common two- and three- dimensional shapes. They need to develop their understanding of more complex shapes and the mathematical language associated with this. At second level, most children can identify right, acute, and obtuse angles. They are not yet confident in their understanding of complementary and supplementary angles.

Information handling

- All children have opportunities to develop their data handling skills. At first level, children use bar charts well to show preferences relating to playground equipment. At first level, most children can discuss successfully how they gathered data for a bar graph. At second level, children can identify a variety of ways to gather and display data including tally marks, line graphs and pie charts. Children at first and second level commonly identify a bar graph as the best approach to displaying information. They are not yet confident in using other methods of displaying data appropriate to the task.

Attainment over time

- Senior leaders and staff track children's progress and attainment over time in literacy and numeracy. Children's attainment levels across literacy and numeracy dipped since returning to school after periods of remote learning. This is particularly the case at all stages in writing, and at early and first level in reading, listening and talking, and numeracy. Senior leaders consider trends and patterns, while recognising that small numbers of children in each stage can impact disproportionately on data analysis. Senior leaders use information to inform

improvement priorities, such as ongoing work in writing, reading comprehension and listening and talking in the early years of primary. These approaches are beginning to support improvements in children's attainment in literacy and numeracy. Senior leaders should now consider how to track children's progress in other curricular areas.

- Senior leaders should develop a strategic overview of approaches used across the school to raise attainment. This should include how staff will measure the impact of new learning and teaching approaches and evaluate the effectiveness of interventions used.

Overall quality of learner's achievements

- Children's achievements are celebrated in various ways, including events, wall displays and class sharing. Staff work with partners and parents to provide children with achievement opportunities out with the classroom, including physical activity and sport. A range of lunchtime clubs are coordinated by children in the upper primaries. They offer their peers chances to enjoy art, debate, dance, coding and choir activities. These opportunities help children to feel included, involved in the life of the school and to develop leadership skills. Senior leaders should increase adult support available to help children plan and deliver these. Staff track children's participation in achievement activities. Almost all children participate in activities in the school or local community. Children describe the benefits of participating in achievement opportunities. They are not yet able to identify skills they develop through their involvement.

Equity for all learners

- The headteacher is using Pupil Equity Funding to support children in the early years to develop their literacy skills, particularly in reading and writing. Senior leaders demonstrate how this intervention is starting to help close gaps in learning 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.