

# Summarised inspection findings

**Amisfield Primary School**

Dumfries and Galloway Council

30 April 2019

## Key contextual information

Amsifield Primary School is a two class school situated on the outskirts of Dumfries. At the time of the inspection the roll was 47 children organised into P1-P4 and P5-P7. The school has a shared headship with Ae Primary School. The school now has stability in staff and the headteacher is supported by a recently appointed class committed principal teacher.

### 1.3 Leadership of change

good

This indicator focuses on collaborative leadership at all levels to develop a shared vision for change and improvement which is meaningful and relevant to the context of the school within its community. Planning for continuous improvement should be evidence-based and linked to effective self-evaluation. Senior leaders should ensure the need for change is well understood and that the pace of change is appropriate to ensure the desired positive impact for learners. The themes are:

- developing a shared vision, values and aims relevant to the school and its community
- strategic planning for continuous improvement
- implementing improvement and change

- The headteacher and all staff place a high priority on inclusion and developing each child as an individual. They work very well as a team with shared goals to ensure successful outcomes for all learners. The school values are displayed around the school and embedded into assemblies and conversations with the children. Affirmation cards reflect these values and awarded to children for 'Doing Well and Being Well'. There are examples of former pupils of the school revisiting these values during challenging times at secondary school. Values link well to the curriculum rationale and evident within outdoor learning and throughout the health and wellbeing approach that's embedded across the school. Staff know the community very well, they celebrate diversity and ensure that families are fully included in all aspects of the school's work. The context and rural setting of the school is well understood and used as a learning opportunity.
- Children, parents, partners and staff speak very positively about the leadership of the headteacher. Very constructive and respectful relationships are a strong feature of the school. The headteacher values all individuals and recognises their strengths and how these can be used across the school. Her commitment to the school is evident and all change is managed through a wellbeing approach. The recently appointed principal teacher has brought stability to the middle leadership within the school. Together they work very well with all staff both in Amisfield and the partner school Ae. They lead by example and all staff increasingly take on leadership roles which impact across the school. Science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), modern languages and cluster moderation are a few examples. There has been insufficient time to measure the impact from the leadership roles. Staff plan to continue to develop leadership opportunities taking account of their interests and the needs of the school. In doing so, they plan to undertake further practitioner enquiry and research opportunities. This will widen the impact of distributed leadership across all staff and all children.
- Children feel empowered to take on leadership roles. They lead assemblies, buddy younger children, lead events in school and within the community. There is scope to raise expectations of children's leadership roles across the school. This includes increased independence within classroom tasks and activities and opportunities within the school and wider community more broadly. Further focused approaches for example, children to express their views and inform learning will further deepen their leadership skills. This increased personalisation and choice

could inform further school improvement plan priorities. Once priorities are established children are fully informed and participate in developments. There is room to improve further evidence used such as stakeholder views to identify priorities from the outset.

- The senior leadership team support professional learning for all staff. There are examples of outward looking approaches to inform improvements. Staff readily share good practice across the cluster and notably the headteacher works in partnership at a national level on the 'Relationship, sexual health and parenthood' (RSHP) initiative. Monitoring approaches and observations of classroom practice are well-received and provides helpful strategies that are revisited. Staff value discussions about classroom practice. Staff maximise the partnership arrangements to plan sustainable and with the stability of staffing in the school they are well-placed to increase the pace change and ensure a breadth of curriculum experience. This will be supported by the plans that the school has to improve approaches to monitoring, tracking and assessing children's progress.
- With the stability in leadership now evident, there is a need to increase the pace of change. In doing so, ensure that strategic planning takes account of rigorous self-evaluation. The school undertakes a number of quality assurance processes which are not yet streamlined well enough to create sustainable improvements. As a result, a number of important and worthwhile initiatives undertaken by the school are not prioritised within the school improvement plan. There is a need to ensure that the school improvement plan reflects accurately identified priorities arising from rigorous self-evaluation. Across the school children are able to achieve more through independent learning and make better progress across all areas of the curriculum.

## 2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

good

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

- learning and engagement
- quality of teaching
- effective use of assessment
- planning, tracking and monitoring

- Most children are well engaged with their learning. There are positive relationships in the school. The school has a welcoming and caring ethos which is nurturing and inclusive. Children are aware of the value of respect and feel safe in their school environment. Pupils take on responsibilities throughout the school such as participating in the Tower Council, being Junior Road Safety Officers and presenting at school assemblies. Children successfully participate in the school buddy system supporting young learners in school. Staff are well placed to further their capacity to work more closely together to share existing good practice.
- Overall the quality of teaching is good. Children are motivated and engaged with their learning. The children particularly enjoy tasks relating to the context of their learning, for example writing letters based on their local community. Children in the P5–P7 class demonstrated their mature understanding of diversity when planning their essay about being Scottish. Where teaching is most effective, learning tasks are carefully differentiated to ensure all children are challenged and supported appropriately. Support staff are deployed effectively to assist the children with their tasks.
- Most children experience challenge at the appropriate level. The school is well placed to add further value to the knowledge and experiences that children bring to the school. Develop further their approaches to build on prior knowledge to improve further the quality of feedback ensuring that it always extends learning. For example, during collaborative learning tasks across the curriculum ensure that tasks extend and enrich the children's vocabulary.
- Children are aware of their learning targets and are involved in planning these with the class teacher. There are examples of children knowing their targets very well and this is most evident in their writing tasks and activities. Child friendly targets are referred to at the start of each lesson and throughout the learning. At the start of topic work children are asked what they want to learn and their views inform the lines of enquiry. For the majority of children effective questioning enables them to build on their prior knowledge. Children respond very positively to this level of challenge and there is an opportunity to extend this further across the school.
- Staff increasingly develop their understanding of standards through the moderation work with local schools. Assessment information showing children's achievement at the end of a level is increasingly accurate. A range of written, oral and creative assessments show children's progress and a few of these are captured well within 'Snapshot' jotters. Approaches to holistic assessment now feature across learning and staff regularly engage in professional dialogue to plan these effectively. However, there is a need for more robust assessment arrangements during the course of teaching for children to achieve more. Developing further peer observations and joint planning with the early years settings and secondary school will support a more accurate view of what children can achieve at each stage and within a level.

- Recently introduced learning pathways across the curriculum are supporting staff well to plan more effectively to meet the needs of children's learning across the curriculum. Children's literacy and numeracy progress through a level is clearly tracked and monitored. The school is continuing to develop manageable approaches to assessment that reflect very well the multi composite organisation of the classes. There is a need to review the organisation of the learning environments to maximise opportunities for independent and teacher led learning more effectively. At times, the pace of learning and level of challenge is not at the correct level for a minority of children.
- When given the opportunity children work well independently. Across the school, they are well placed to take greater responsibility for managing their own learning. In the younger class staff are at the early stages of planning learning through play focusing on children understanding the skills for work that this provides for them. In addition, there are examples of children using tablets and digital technologies appropriately to record their own learning and that of other children in their class. We asked the school to build on this positive start and involve children more effectively in planning their own learning.

## 2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- The school makes use of local authority guidance which offer pathways to cover all the experiences and outcomes. The Headteacher and staff should continue to develop these to ensure breadth across all curricular areas. In writing, clear targets support children's understanding of their strengths and next steps very well. Staff make good use of benchmarks in literacy and numeracy. These align well to the local authority pathways. There is a need to continue to develop further a shared understanding of the standards.
- Interdisciplinary learning planners follow guidance set out by the cluster. The school implements these using a three year cycle. The content of these planners reflects the locality, local environment and includes links to the cultural heritage of farming and military service. We asked the school to ensure that children experience a breadth of curriculum.
- Whole school contexts such as the 'Greatest Showman' links learning very well across both the partnership schools. The learning culminated in a very well-attended and highly regarded community celebration. This work developed important skills in literacy, physical education and wellbeing. This approach reflects the curriculum rationale very well, celebrates diversity, and is highly motivational for children, parents and staff.

## 2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- Parents praise highly the inclusive approach that all staff take to including families within the life and work of the school. They feel that they are always welcome and that their individual strengths and talents are used to support their own child and the school more widely. Effective communication keeps them informed about events and the progress that their child is making.
- The parent council is highly visible and parents feel that they are kept up to date with the work that the group takes. They fund raise to ensure that costs for trips and outings are kept to a minimum. In addition to fundraising the parent council feel that they are involved fully in discussions relating to school improvement planning priorities.
- Reading sessions, soft finishes, reading workshops and RSHP are a few of the activities well attended by parents that enable them to learn alongside their children. Staff created helpful leaflets outlining progression across the levels and reading strategies. This session the Amisfield in Action events will focus on STEM with direct links to the world of work.

## 2.1 Safeguarding

- The school submitted self-evaluation information related to child protection and safeguarding. Inspectors discussed this information with relevant staff and, where appropriate, children. In addition, inspectors examined a sample of safeguarding documentation. At the time of the inspection, there were no identified areas for development.



### 3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

very good

This indicator focuses on the impact of the school's approach to wellbeing which underpins children and young people's ability to achieve success. It highlights the need for policies and practices to be well grounded in current legislation and a shared understanding of the value of every individual. A clear focus on ensuring wellbeing entitlements and protected characteristics supports all learners to maximise their successes and achievements. The themes are:

- wellbeing
- fulfilment of statutory duties
- inclusion and equality

- Wellbeing as a key to success is a priority of the headteacher and embraced and developed by all staff. She articulates its value very well and a focus on wellbeing is reflected through all aspects of the life and work of the school. Of particular note is the involvement at local and national level of the headteacher working to formulate and implement policy across the cluster and local authority which will offer guidance to schools in Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood Education. Her skills, knowledge and passion for wellbeing make important contributions to the wider Scottish education system. In addition, through the work of the school, children are very well informed about disability and diversity. They have depth of understanding about issues of equality and relate this to their actions.
- Approaches to healthy minds and healthy bodies are embedded within the life and work of the school. Partnership work enhances this and children can apply strategies to support their responses to issues should they arise. For example, children can self-regulate and they know who to talk to in school in the event of a concern or difficulty. They can articulate strategies that support them as individuals if they become overwhelmed in school during class time. They use time out areas within the classroom and opportunities for reflection with confidence.
- Children, staff and parents feel valued and relationships are very positive. The strong family ethos is promoted with consistency by all members of the school community. Strengths of children, parents and staff are recognised and used more widely across the school as a whole. Children understand a range of ways to stay healthy through physical health, mindfulness and healthy eating. The school operates a 'buddy' system where older pupils take responsibility for the guidance of their younger school friends.
- Children are confident in understanding the relevance of the Health and Wellbeing indicators. They can discuss these with each other and with the adults with whom they come into contact. They can apply these concepts into their own contexts and real life situations. Children are treated as individuals and diversity is celebrated. They benefit from individual wellbeing focused discussions with staff that use wellbeing webs to monitor and track progress. Parents also participated in understanding the wellbeing indicators and how this is reflected in their actions as parents.
- The children have the opportunity to be representatives on the Tower school council. This committee is heavily involved in maintaining and improving the life and ethos of the school. The Tower Council participate in school assemblies, award events and school curricular initiatives, offering leadership and organisational roles to the participating pupils. This established pupil council is well placed to further develop strategies for listening to and responding the views of the pupils.

- There are appropriate arrangements in place to comply with statutory duties. The headteacher and staff are committed to the children's wellbeing. Staff engage in professional training and regular updates to support them in their care for the children. They keep up to date with important developments and the legislation affecting child care.
- Staff are aware of the local authority's stage intervention process and apply this well to meet the needs of children. Individual children who require support with either short term or long term barriers to learning are supported by staffing resources, well deployed to offer well-judged and appropriate intervention. Children enjoy this additional support as well as making very good progress in their learning. The school has a strong inclusive ethos and the children embrace diversity and are knowledgeable about disability.
- A local Special Olympian is a strong role model for the children. As a volunteer and frequent visitor she contributes to many aspects of the life and work of the school. Children embrace the approaches the school employs in relation to a positive mental health. They are very familiar with a variety of coping strategies that enable them to self-regulate and manage challenging situations.

### 3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

good

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

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

#### Attainment in literacy and numeracy.

- Due to the small numbers of children in each cohort the inspection team proportionally sampled evidence of children's progress and found that overall, attainment in literacy and numeracy is good. Data provided by the school is overall accurate. Teacher professional judgement takes account of standardised assessments, Scottish National Standardised Assessments, writing criterion and commercial end of unit assessment. Ongoing assessment is gathered through well used assessment for learning strategies. The headteacher is currently exploring ways to further develop moderation activities within her partnership schools and cluster schools She is continuing to develop the accuracy of teacher professional judgement.

#### Attainment in Literacy

##### Listening and Talking

- Overall, progress in Listening and Talking is good. Across the school children listen well with respect to their teachers and to one another. Children at early and first level children listen well and respond appropriately to the instructions given. There is a need to develop vocabulary acquisition which takes account of children's age and stage. Children should be more independent and encouraged to take more ownership of their talking and listening activities, taking turns at the appropriate time in a variety of contexts. The children at second level speak with confidence, fluency and articulate their thoughts well. They take turns at speaking with maturity and listen well to others when they are talking. They present to each other at regular school assemblies and participate in a number of school events sharing their learning. There is a need to further develop children's listening and talking skills in specialist vocabulary for different purposes. Children are less confident at demonstrating an informed view that takes account of a range of sources.

##### Reading

- Overall most children are making good progress in reading. By the end of P4 most children are achieving first level. They make use of a number of reading resources. Children are developing the tools for reading and are using their skills to improve their comprehension of a text.
- Children in P5–P7 read aloud with fluency and expression. They are involved in a reading initiative set to encourage their enjoyment of reading. They can talk about characters and the setting of some of the texts they have read. They have an understanding of genre and know a number of children's authors and discuss with confidence their favourite books. Children know the difference between fiction and non-fiction text. They are aware of the style of some writers, and how use of language can affect the readers' response to the text. There is a need to continue to develop their understanding of the increasing complex and unfamiliar ideas presented by fiction and non-fiction texts.

## Writing

- Across the school children are making good progress in writing. At early and first level, children write letters in response to 'Katie Morag' who had written to them. The children demonstrate their ability to use the correct format for a formal letter and address it appropriately. Children should be given further opportunity to write at length and consistently improve the quality of their writing. Children at second level enjoy writing for a range of purposes and are aware of genre, form and structure. They create texts which reflect their local culture and context. Teachers are well placed to encourage children to explore a greater variety of styles as they create texts.

## Numeracy

- Overall, attainment in numeracy is good with most children making appropriate progress in numeracy and mathematics. Children are increasingly developing well their skills in mental agility. They are becoming more confident in demonstrating their thinking through a range of strategies. Overall there is a need for children to demonstrate a breadth of skills, knowledge and understanding across all areas of numeracy and mathematics. More regular opportunities to apply their learning using word problems is needed to improve their progress and deepen their learning. In addition, there is a need to maximise opportunities for a few children to be challenged further taking account of their prior knowledge.

## Number, money and measure

- At early level, children count forwards and backwards to 20. They also count backwards from ten in French. At first level children are confident in written calculations. They add and subtract two digit numbers and recognise a wide range of numbers. They can complete calculations involving two-digit numbers. They can use money and work out how much change from £1.00. By second level children know place value to seven figures with two decimal places. They can round to one significant figure and use partitioning strategies. Most understand scale and scale factor, they can reason algebraically and know that numbers can be replaced by symbols. The majority of children know the meaning of the 'brackets, orders, division, multiplication, addition, subtraction' BODMAS acronym to solve operations for problems in the correct order.

## Shape position and movement

- At first level most children can compare areas of rectangles on a grid. They can tile regular and irregular shapes and know which shapes are unable to tile. At second level they can recognise lines of symmetry within a range of two dimensional shapes. Overall, most children do not experience enough breadth of numeracy and mathematics across all of the organisers. As a result, they are not yet confident in knowledge relating to shape, position and movement. For example, calculating the area of complex shapes or the volume of cuboids using formula.

## Information handling

- At first level, most children can extract information from picture and column graphs, in which one symbol represents multiple units. They can identify a survey question to gather specific data and extract information from simple pie graphs. At second level they can interpret data from simple charts. There is a need to ensure that the pace of learning across all organisers enables children to access a wider range of data visualisation for example, scatter graphs and that they understand correlations and relationships.

## **Attainment over time**

- Data provided by the school is increasingly accurate. By the end of P7, most children achieve second level. In addition to the progress that children make by the end of the second level most make good progress from their prior learning on an individual basis.
- The school tracks data in literacy and numeracy over time looking at the progress of individual children on entry into school. Data takes account of individual classroom teachers and end of level attainment. The school is well placed to make use of the data to identify whole school improvement priorities such as listening and talking.
- Across the curriculum children's progress is less clear and staff are developing further their understanding of standards. With the implementation of curricular pathways and benchmarks their understanding of standards will continue to develop. We discussed with staff the need for high expectations and standards across all areas of the curriculum that takes account of the structure of the school and classroom organisation.

## **Overall quality of learners' achievement**

- Children take responsibility and are developing skills that contribute to the ethos of the school and their own achievements. The Tower council help to plan and organise school events, assemblies and various presentations. The John Wilson Trophy, Toddler Time and the Remembrance event are all major school initiatives where the children have an active role in their planning organisation and implementation.
- Children enjoy visits out of school, participating in sports events with their partner school and had a visit to the Beamish Centre which they enjoyed. The children take a pride in their school and community and articulate their understanding of disability with maturity and clarity. Staff promote healthy lifestyles through planned activities and with active school partners. Children are also offered sound nutritional advice at the core of their curriculum. They have access to a Lego club in school which helps them develop important team building skills.
- Staff are aware of the socio-economic context of the school and address any gaps children may have through the universal and targeted support. The school allocated the small amount of pupil equity fund to improve outcomes. We asked them to ensure that the targeted interventions relate to the focused themes outlined within the national improvement framework measures and sub-measures. In doing so, continue to take account of the small numbers of children involved and how this relates to the data within these measures. However, interventions should lead to improvements in for example, literacy, numeracy, attendance or wellbeing etc. We asked the school to continue to monitor any gaps children may experience.

## Choice of QI : Family Learning

- Engaging families in learning
- Early intervention and prevention
- Quality of family learning programmes

- The open door policy and welcoming ethos ensures that parents and the local community feel valued and involved in the school. The universal offer for all parents provides a highly positive climate for parents to engage with staff and children's learning. Learning opportunities with families support children in their learning. In addition, information sessions delivered in partnership with the local secondary school provide helpful advice for parents to support their children across different sectors.
- The highly positive and trusting relationships enable families to approach the school, when necessary, to access resources and services provided by external agencies. Children and families are at the centre of planning and their involvement is embedded into whole school improvements. Staff work very closely with parents to reduce any barriers that their children have in their learning.
- Of note is the work the school is delivering to parents on RSHP. This includes sharing with parents the learning that their child will receive during the sensitive lesson. Previous information sessions about the health and wellbeing indicators provided a focus on for parents on what that means within parenting.
- Continue as planned to self-evaluate approaches to family learning within the context of the small school.

## Practice worth sharing more widely

The leadership of the headteacher on inclusion and equalities underpins the life and the work of the school. The school's approach to promoting and celebrating diversity takes very good account of the local context. It is relevant and ensures that children's knowledge is extended appropriately. The recent performance of 'The Greatest Showman' was an accumulation of work on diversity. Children have a sound understanding of diversity, disability and the opportunities these afford. In addition, children's understanding of strategies to support their mental health and the mental health of other children are well understood. Parents are fully included in the school's work on curriculum content and wellbeing. Their recent session on wellbeing and parenting informed them of how each of the wellbeing indicators relate to them as parents and exemplified how their actions can impact on the children to develop these at home independently of the school.

## 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.