Summarised inspection findings

Farr Primary School - Bettyhill

The Highland Council

21 January 2025

Key contextual information

Farr Primary School is a small, rural, non-denominational primary school in Bettyhill, Highland. The school catchment area covers Bettyhill and Borgie on the north coast of Sutherland and is part of the North Coast Campus. The campus includes primary schools and nurseries at Farr, Melvich and Tongue and also Farr High School. The schools are not located close to one another, with their joint catchment covering a vast geographical area.

The established headteacher has been in post for seven years. She has the support of two depute headteachers who were appointed when the campus was established. They work on a job-share basis. One of the depute headteachers has responsibility for the nursery. The other depute headteacher has responsibility for the primary school. There is also a principal teacher (0.5fte) who was appointed in February 2024. The headteacher and depute headteachers provide significant cover across the campus for staff absence.

At the time of the inspection, the school roll was 31 children across two multi-composite classes. A minority of children across the school have additional support needs. In September 2022, all children lived in quintile three of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation. In February 2024, a minority of P6-P7 children were registered for free school meals.

1.3 Leadership of change	satisfactory

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

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

- Senior leaders and staff face ongoing and significant long-term issues relating to the recruitment of supply teachers and filling vacant staffing posts. Often, senior leaders are class committed for extended periods of time. The headteacher recognises that the pace of change has been adversely impacted as a result of these staffing difficulties. She works effectively with the local authority and staff to ensure that the impact of staff shortages on children are minimised. She provides strong leadership and is ambitious for children to achieve success.

- Children are friendly, welcoming and enthusiastic. They are keen to share their experiences with visitors and are proud of their school. All staff work well together as a team. They have a strong understanding of the school's socio-economic context and the challenges facing children and families. They use Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) well to support improvements in children's literacy, numeracy and wellbeing. Senior leaders should ensure that they consult more widely when identifying how these funds should be spent.

- Senior leaders and staff refreshed the school's vision, values and aims last session in consultation with parents and children. The values of safe, respected and challenged are displayed attractively in the school and are linked effectively to the wellbeing indicators and children's rights. Senior leaders revisit these values through whole-school assemblies. A few children understand how the values, wellbeing indicators and rights translate into real life

situations and are linked to their learning. Most children require more support to fully understand how these apply to their own lives. Senior leaders and staff now need to raise awareness and understanding of the school values, wellbeing indicators and children's rights with children and parents. They should work together to ensure that they underpin, and are reflected in, all aspects of the life of the school. This should ensure a clear and consistent focus on improving outcomes for children.

■ Senior leaders have developed clear processes to support quality assurance through regular self-evaluation activities. They gather useful information from sampling children's work, lesson observations, and questionnaires. They meet with teachers three times per year to review children's progress in learning. Senior leaders, working collaboratively with the wider staff, use How good is our school? 4th edition well to evaluate the work of the school. They analyse information effectively and use it to direct school improvement. However, they now need to use the information gathered more effectively to better identify key areas for improvement. Moving forward, senior leaders should ensure improvement priorities focus on improving learning and teaching and increasing children's progress and attainment. They should also consider further opportunities to increase the involvement of parents, children and partners in planning and evaluating school improvement.

■ Senior leaders support staff, including non-teaching staff well to engage meaningfully with annual staff professional reviews. They respond positively to staff's professional interests and support them to undertake development priorities linked to these areas. Senior leaders ensure that professional reviews and staff development plans are linked to school improvement priorities. They should now ensure that staff development plans capture how all staff are developing their leadership skills and capacities in line with General Teaching Council for Scotland standards.

■ Across the school, the majority of staff take responsibility for aspects of school improvement. For example, they are involved in developing new approaches to improve literacy and numeracy with older children and play with younger children. This work is at the early stages of implementation and is not yet leading to improved outcomes for children.

■ All staff have engaged in professional learning to support children's emotional wellbeing. This is resulting in staff becoming more aware of their own body language and tone of voice. As a result, staff have a greater understanding of the importance of developing positive relationships and is leading to children engaging with learning better. Teachers have also engaged in moderation activities with colleagues across the campus to develop confidence relating to standards of attainment in writing and numeracy. They should continue to engage with national Benchmarks to improve further their understanding of national standards. Senior leaders should continue to improve moderation processes to ensure that teachers' professional judgements about children's progress in learning are more accurate and robust.

■ Children across the school benefit from a range of leadership opportunities. For example, they are members of the pupil council, the eco group or the rights respecting schools' group. Children talk positively about the contribution they make to the life of the school through these groups. Older children are digital leaders or peaceful problem-solving referees, supporting their peers in learning and in resolving conflict. The head pupils represent the school well when welcoming visitors. A majority of children believe the school takes their views into account. A minority of children are not sure if their views are listened to and acted upon. Senior leaders should plan further opportunities for children to evaluate the work of the school and contribute to school improvement.

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

- Almost all children are polite and respectful to adults and visitors to the school. A majority of children feel that they are respected by their peers. The values of safe, respectful, and challenged are not yet fully visible within the life of the school. Staff need to model and refer to these more regularly. This should ensure children understand the significance of these to their learning and interactions with others. This should also ensure that the values become fully embedded in the life of the school.

- In the majority of classes, teachers create calm, purposeful learning environments. Overall, most children engage well in their learning. Most children are eager participants in class discussions. A minority of children need regular reminders to listen, stay on task and to not distract others. For example, a minority of children talk while others are talking, giggle at inappropriate moments and do not listen to adult instructions. Most teachers provide well-timed reminders and share expectations of behaviour to help children who require it. They use praise and positive reinforcement well which helps children have a clear understanding of how to be a good learner. Pupil support assistants provide support to help individuals listen and take part in class activities. Senior leaders need to work with teachers to develop a shared and consistent understanding across the school of high expectations regarding behaviour. They should review with staff and children the school's positive relationships policy. In doing so, they should ensure that the policy reflects accurately the schools' values and provides clear guidance for staff to ensure consistency of approach.

- The school has been awarded accreditation for promoting their work on children's rights. Children are beginning to engage with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). They learn about their rights during whole school assemblies. A few older children are able to talk about a few rights. A more consistent approach is needed, however, to ensure all children fully understand their needs and rights under the UNCRC. All staff should encourage children to see how rights affect their interactions with others.

- Senior leaders and staff have recently developed a helpful 'Learning and Teaching Framework' which aims to develop consistency of high-quality learning and teaching across the school. This framework clearly lays out expectations of teachers and staff regarding the learning environment, planning and delivery of learning. Teachers and staff are at the early stages of implementing this framework into their practice. Where necessary, senior leaders should provide high-quality professional learning to enable staff to apply the framework consistently across the school. This should support them to improve further their practice. In doing so, all staff now need to ensure that children's learning experiences and outcomes improve.

- Across the school, most children say that they enjoy learning and find their learning hard enough. The majority engage well in their learning most of the time. The majority of children work well in pairs and groups. They are respectful of each other. In most lessons, teachers'

instructions and explanations are clear. This helps children understand the purpose of their learning. Teachers need to support children more consistently to ensure they understand how they can be successful in learning. In a majority of lessons, children are able to discuss what they need to do to improve. As a next step, teachers should encourage children to co-create their own steps to success. This will support children to take greater ownership of their learning. A minority of lessons are overly teacher directed. In these lessons, children are too passive in their learning. Teachers should ensure that all lessons provide opportunities for children to lead their learning and be active participants. Throughout lessons, most teachers provide quality verbal feedback that supports children well. They should continue to develop approaches to written feedback to provide clearer guidance for children on how to improve further.

- In most lessons, questioning is used to check for understanding of the task. In a minority of lessons, teachers ask open-ended questions to extend children's thinking. Teachers should ensure that high-quality questioning is used more consistently to support and challenge children in their learning.

- Teachers set work at the correct level of difficulty for the majority of children. They now need to plan more consistently learning that provides appropriate support and challenge to better match children's needs. Where children have choice in learning, teachers should direct children to activities that match their abilities better. A minority of children would benefit from greater challenge in their learning. They would benefit from greater opportunities to apply learning in different contexts. In most lessons, teachers need to increase the pace of learning to ensure children remain engaged and motivated. Across the school, children are involved in drafting and reviewing their own learning targets. This is beginning to support most children well to understand their individual progress.

- Teachers use digital technology, such as interactive whiteboards, successfully during whole class lessons. Older children have access to 1:1 digital devices. Children across the school access digital devices well to support and enhance learning. For example, they research topics, access online learning materials and applications, and use word processing programs to present their work. Children learn digital skills progressively which enables them to build on their prior learning. Teachers are well placed to further develop the use of digital technology to enhance learning and teaching across the school.

- Staff are at the early stages of developing play pedagogy for younger children. They plan for teacher directed and child-led experiences at different points through the day. Staff are developing their confidence in the use of the learning environment to promote children's creativity, curiosity and independence. They should now plan play experiences taking into greater consideration the balance of teacher-directed, teacher-initiated and child-initiated experiences in line with national practice guidance. They should continue to consider how experiences for children are progressive and developmentally appropriate.

- Teachers use ongoing assessment and summative assessments to identify children's progress and gaps in their learning. They plan for the medium and short term using the experiences and outcomes of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE). Teachers ensure children's interests are considered. This motivates most children in their learning. Within literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing, teachers use national Benchmarks to determine children's progress towards achievement of a level. Teachers should now use national Benchmarks to measure children's progress across all areas of the curriculum. This should support teachers to plan learning across the curriculum to consistently meet children's learning needs and abilities.

■ Teachers have worked with colleagues across the campus to moderate children's writing and numeracy. This has supported them to have greater confidence in making judgements against national standards in writing and numeracy. As planned, senior leaders should now provide moderation activities across the wider curriculum. This should improve further the accuracy and robustness of teachers' judgements of attainment levels across the whole curriculum and improve outcomes for children.

■ Senior leaders meet with teachers three times per year to discuss children's progress, with a focus on identifying children who are not on track. As a result, they identify appropriate interventions to support individual children. Senior leaders and teachers maintain an overview of the progress individual children make as a result of targeted support. Senior leaders and teachers should now consider how attainment across the wider curriculum can be tracked. This should ensure that children make the best possible progress across all areas of the curriculum.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

■ Staff use progression pathways across all curricular areas based on the experiences and outcomes and design principles of CfE. They should now use these more consistently to plan learning and teaching to meet better the needs of all children, including those requiring additional support.

■ Teachers group CfE experiences and outcomes to plan relevant contexts for learning. They ensure that these contexts are based on children's interests and allow children to apply their skills and knowledge. There is scope to further develop planning of learning contexts to ensure children experience greater personalisation, choice, breadth and depth in their learning. Teachers should now ensure planning of learning supports children to effectively develop their skills in a more progressive manner.

■ Children have access to attractive grounds and beautiful natural landscapes that surround the school. Senior leaders recognise the need to ensure that children experience greater opportunities to take their learning outdoors. They should ensure that a progressive programme for outdoor learning is developed to support children's emotional wellbeing, enhance their knowledge of the local area and learning for sustainability.

■ All children receive two hours of high-quality physical education (PE) provided by the link secondary school PE specialist and the class teacher each week. They participate in blocks of swimming lessons twice a year. Children from P1 to P7 learn Gaelic and children in P4-P7 learn French progressively in line with the Scottish Government's 1+2 modern languages policy. Most children are confident using common words and phrases, for example, greetings, days of the week and how they are feeling. Their learning builds well on previous skills.

■ All children access a range of texts and genres from their class and school libraries. This is helping children to read for enjoyment and supports well the development of their reading skills.

■ Senior leaders have developed positive partnerships with the local community. These partners are used well to enhance the delivery of the curriculum. For example, older children develop their learning in science, technologies, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) through online partnerships; they participate in the local Feis which supports their learning in Gaelic language and culture. Younger children participate in music programs which supports their learning in music. These effective partnerships offer rich learning contexts to enhance children's experiences.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

■ Staff have developed positive relationships with families and the wider community. As a result, most parents are comfortable in approaching the school with questions or suggestions. The majority of parents recognise the school takes their views into account when making changes. Most parents feel that they receive helpful feedback about how their child is learning and developing. An important next step is to develop further opportunities for parents to engage in the life of the school and support their children's learning at home.

■ The Parent Council is very supportive of the school. Parent members regularly raise funds to support staffs' ambition to reduce the cost of the school day. For example, they provide funding for buses to allow children to attend school trips. They have purchased playground equipment and cooking equipment to enhance children's learning experiences.

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	satisfactory

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

■ Across the school, there is an inclusive and welcoming ethos. Children are proud of their school and show respect for adults and visitors. The majority of children say the school helps them to become confident and most children say that they enjoy learning.

■ Staff have built caring and trusting relationships with children which underpin most interactions. The majority of children show care and respect for one another in positive classroom and playground interactions. Children are developing an awareness and understanding that all children are unique and may need different levels of help from the adults around them. An important next step is for staff to further develop nurturing approaches across the school and develop strategies with all children to support them better to manage their emotions.

■ All children are fully involved in the life of the school. They have opportunities to participate in a range of leadership groups. For example, all children in P4-7 are trained as playground leaders. They organise playground games and take responsibility for looking out for the welfare of younger children. As a result, children are developing their skills for learning, life and work through their participation.

■ Most children feel that staff teach them to have a healthy lifestyle. During health and wellbeing lessons, children consider aspects of healthy lifestyles and making choices. Children benefit from being active through a range of additional physical activities, provided by school staff and partners. As a result, they are developing their gross motor skills, building resilience and developing teamwork.

■ Children are developing a clear understanding of their wellbeing. They identify different ways they can be safe, active and healthy. They are beginning to be able to discuss the different wellbeing indicators and most can articulate how the school helps them to have healthy lifestyles. For example, staff are helping children to make healthy eating choices and access to regular physical exercise. Children evaluate their wellbeing three times per year using developmentally appropriate tools. Regular emotional check-ins support children well to consider how they are feeling and understand their emotions. Most children agree that they can speak to an adult in school should they feel worried or upset. Senior leaders and teachers use this information effectively to plan and provide support where appropriate. As a result, most children feel safe, and the majority agree that school staff help to keep them safe.

■ Around half of children feel that they are treated with respect by their peers and most feel other children behave well. A minority of children and parents feel bullying is not always dealt with well. Senior leaders should work with staff, parents and children to review the positive behaviour policy. In doing so, they should ensure there is a clear and shared understanding across the school community about what constitutes bullying and how it should be addressed.

- As a result of regular training and guidance, all staff understand and apply the statutory requirements and codes of practice in relation to child protection. Senior leaders have developed robust systems to support child protection procedures and keep children safe. Teachers audited how inclusive their classroom was at the beginning of the session. This helped them to provide a more flexible, inclusive learning environment for children. As a next step, they should audit the learning environment more regularly to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of all children.

- Staff have a good understanding of the range of children's needs within class. Plans are in place for children who require additional support with their learning. Where appropriate, senior leaders ensure partners support children in aspects of their learning and wellbeing. For example, older children have access to a support worker or counsellor to help them with strategies to improve their emotional wellbeing. In a few children's plans, senior leaders should ensure targets are agreed with children and parents to support progress in learning. Parents are aware of decisions made about their child. A minority of parents feel their child does not receive the help that they need to do well. Children's progress in relation to planned targets should be reviewed and measured more regularly with children and parents. This should ensure there is a partnership approach to improving outcomes for children.

- There are well-established and effective transition programmes in place to support children well as they move into P1, from P7 to secondary school and across classes. All staff across the nursery, primary and secondary schools know all children very well. Staff across the nursery and school work effectively together to ensure they understand children's pastoral and academic needs. Teachers visit the nursery on a weekly basis to allow close and nurturing relationships to be built over time. This helps children to transition successfully to school. Children in P7 routinely interact with secondary staff as part of the shared campus. PE is taught by a specialist secondary teacher weekly and secondary teachers will visit primary classes to support the curriculum, particularly around literacy, numeracy and science. This helps to build children's confidence when transitioning to secondary school.

- Children across the school do not yet have a consistent understanding of equality, inclusion or diversity. Staff should ensure children have increased opportunities to understand, promote and celebrate diversity. In doing so, they should ensure that children fully understand their place in the world as global citizens. This should help children to develop further their skills and understanding to tackle discrimination and intolerance.

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

- The number of children at each stage varies and is relatively small. Overall statements have been made about attainment and progress to ensure individual children are not identified.

- Overall children's attainment in literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics is satisfactory. Teacher's professional judgements of attainment are becoming more robust. The majority of children with additional support needs are making satisfactory progress towards their individual targets. A minority of children across the school are capable of making greater progress and require more challenge in their learning.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Children are making satisfactory progress in literacy and English.

Listening and talking

- Younger children take turns and contribute to discussion at appropriate times. They listen and respond appropriately to others. Younger children talk about simple stories and answer questions. Older children share their views confidently. They are keen to discuss their interests. Older children need further well-planned opportunities to improve their ability to answer inferential and literal questions about texts.

Reading

- Younger children are building fluency and expression when reading aloud. They read familiar texts well using a range of skills and retell familiar stories. Older children describe characters and the main ideas in books they read. They are becoming more aware of how the writer uses their craft to create interest and excitement. They would benefit from support to read with greater fluency and expression, using appropriate pace and tone.

Writing

- Younger children write one or more sentences independently. They use capital letters and full stops correctly. They apply their knowledge of sounds to spell tricky words. Older children enjoy writing for a range of purposes, using notes well to help them to plan their writing. They create a range of short texts regularly for different purposes. Older children would benefit from further support to confidently use a range of language techniques. For example, to use simile, metaphor and a greater variety of punctuation to engage their reader.

Numeracy and mathematics
- Children are making satisfactory progress in numeracy and mathematics.

Number, money and measure
- Younger children identify and write numbers to 100 confidently. They identify the number before, after and between. They accurately add numbers within 10. They are less confident subtracting numbers within 10. Older children have a sound understanding of place value. They solve three-digit addition problems with an increasing range of strategies. They are less confident to subtract three-digit numbers. Older children identify and write simple fractions. They require support to convert fractions, decimals and percentages.

Shape, position and movement
- Younger children confidently name familiar two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects. As children progress through the school, they can identify an increasing range of two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects. Children are less confident in describing the properties of two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects. Older children require further experiences in exploring problems relating to area and perimeter. They describe acute, right, obtuse, and reflex angles accurately. They are not confident in calculating complementary and supplementary angles.

Information handling
- As children progress through the school, they select and use the most appropriate way to gather and sort data for a given purpose in relation to their age and stage. Younger children sort items by colour, shape and size. Older children are developing skills in using various types of graphs, pie charts and tally marks to present and interpret information. They would benefit from experiences in using digital technology to create charts and graphs.

Attainment over time
- Senior leaders and teachers gather a range of attainment data for individual children in literacy and English, numeracy and mathematics and health and wellbeing. Senior leaders acknowledge that robust tracking of attainment over time requires further development and have rightly identified this as an important area for improvement. They are at the early stages of analysing data for groups and cohorts, to identify trends. This analysis should support them to measure the impact of school improvement initiatives and interventions more effectively.

- Over time, children's attendance is consistently in line with the national average. Thirteen percent of children have an absence of 10% or more. Senior leaders monitor closely the absence and lateness of individual children. They are proactive in understanding the reasons behind children's individual absences. Senior leaders highlight how attendance and timekeeping affects children's attainment and wellbeing with parents. This is impacting well on the attainment of a few of these children.

Overall quality of learners' achievements
- Staff value children's achievements both in and outside of school. They celebrate achievements at assemblies, display them on achievement boards and more widely through the school's social media channels. These celebrations are helping to build children's confidence and self-esteem.

- Senior leaders track and monitor children's participation in wider achievement opportunities. This supports them in ensuring that no child is missing out. Senior leaders recognise the need to track the skills that children develop as a result of these opportunities. As planned, they should develop pathways to ensure that children build progressively on their skills across all

stages. This should support children to make links between their learning and achievements and the skills for learning, life and work they are developing.

Equity for all learners

■ Senior leaders are very aware of the socio-economic context of their school community. They use PEF funding well to enhance staffing and develop approaches to literacy and numeracy. Planned approaches, interventions and strategies are beginning to have a positive impact on children's overall progress in literacy and numeracy. For example, small group work is beginning to support children to close gaps in their learning. Senior leaders need to evaluate more closely the impact of all planned interventions on attainment. This will help them to understand how well they are closing the attainment gap caused by children's socio-economic circumstances.

■ Senior leaders and staff are mindful of the need to minimise the cost of the school day to ensure all children have equity of experience. They work closely with the Parent Council who carry out significant fundraising. This fundraising ensures that all school trips and residential experiences are subsidised or free for children. This ensures that no child misses out due to financial restrictions.

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.