

Summarised inspection findings

Alyth Primary School and Nursery Class

Perth and Kinross Council

24 April 2018

Key contextual information

Alyth Primary School serves the town of Alyth and surrounding areas. At the time of the inspection there were 184 children in the school arranged into eight classes. The school has undergone a period of staff changes over a couple of years. A number of teacher posts have been filled on a temporary basis.

In August 2017 the school moved into its new building, which provides children with a very good learning environment.

1.1 Self-evaluation for self-improvement

satisfactory

This indicator defines rigorous self-evaluation as a responsibility of all stakeholders. It highlights the importance of partnership approaches to self-evaluation and continuous improvement. It emphasizes the need for strong leadership and robust analysis of a range of intelligence and data as essential features of effective continuous self-improvement. A key factor in this indicator is demonstrating the impact of self-evaluation in relation to outcomes for all learners. Their active participation in self-evaluation is therefore essential. The themes are:

- Collaborative approaches to self-evaluation
- Analysis and evaluation of intelligence and data
- Ensuring impact on learners' successes and achievements

- School staff are developing a commitment to self-evaluation for improvement. Staff make use of the quality indicators in How good is our school? on an annual basis to consider the work of their school and identify aspects for further development. The annual school improvement plan priorities are then developed and shared with the Parent Council and onwards to the wider parental body via the Parent Council's social media account. Currently, the school has few regular, formal approaches to gather stakeholders' views. Parents have expressed the view that they would welcome better communication from the school about its work. As the school takes forward its plans to review its statement on vision, values and aims it should ensure that children, parents and partners views are sought so they have greater involvement in in shaping school improvement.
- Through the local authority's improvement planning processes, the school has appropriately identified aspects of its work to develop further. The development of approaches to teaching mathematics and numeracy is a key priority and this is starting to have positive results in enhancing children's learning experiences. The school has experienced a number of years where there have been staff changes. As a result of this, it has identified the need to re-establish consistency in teachers' approaches to planning, assessment and reporting so that children across the school have high quality learning experiences.
- In most classes, children have opportunities to take responsibility for a number of daily classroom routines. Overall, teachers consult children about their learning in class and help them set their individual targets for improving their progress. This school session, each class has started to develop their own 'learning journey book' and children are given opportunities to reflect on their classwork and share their views on this with their teachers. Although there are some examples of good practice in this development, it is at an early stage in most classes and has not yet impacted on children's experiences across the school. The school should share the good practice, which exists more widely, and gather children's views on their learning experiences more effectively across all classes. The Pupil Council, and the 'Eco Engineers' group provides structured, regular opportunities for children who are members of these groups to have their views heard and have their ideas for development taken forward.

There is scope for the school to provide better opportunities for all children to be involved in school decision making and take forward leadership roles in the school.

- The school's quality improvement programme has a number of helpful processes, which if used more effectively would ensure that there is focused attention on monitoring and reviewing children's progress. The headteacher and depute headteacher monitor learning and teaching and have termly, discussions with teachers about their class and individual children's learning. Classroom observations could be used more effectively to ensure consistency of approaches and expectations. There is good practice in Alyth Primary School. This practice needs to be shared. There is scope to develop consistency in high-quality learning and teaching across the school. While most staff know children as individuals and have an understanding of their circumstances, this knowledge could be used more effectively to identify and meet barriers to learning.
- This year, the school has begun to implement the local authority's new system which tracks children's progress across their time in school. Although not fully embedded, this is helping teachers to record their predictions about when children will achieve the national expected levels of attainment and make interventions to help children to succeed. Teachers now need to track more robustly the attainment of different groups of learners to ensure all children make the best possible progress.
- Teachers have taken opportunities to work with each other and with colleagues within the local school cluster to moderate standards and gain a better shared understanding national benchmarks of achievement of a level in numeracy and mathematics and literacy and English. Through this, they are improving their understanding of children's progress. They should build on this work and plan for the further use of benchmarks in other curriculum areas.
- All teachers participate in the school's professional review and development process which uses the General Teaching Council for Scotland standards as a focus. Priorities in the school improvement plan are appropriately being taken forward by teacher working groups. This is providing some teachers with leadership opportunities. The school should look to provide all teachers with areas of responsibility to increase their ownership of school improvement and its impact on children's learning.
- The school has good partnerships with social work services and health services, the local authority inclusion team, and some community groups including Alyth Youth Partnership, and Alyth Community Wing. The school's work with these partners has had a positive impact on individual children's experiences, for example the family club. The school should look for ways to involve a range of partners further in its approaches to self-evaluation for improvement so that all children's learning experiences are improved further.

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.

3.2 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 numeracy is satisfactory. Based on data provided by the school from May 2017, most children by the end of P1 achieved early level for reading, writing, listening and talking and mathematics. By the end of P4, the majority of children achieved first level for reading, listening and talking and numeracy. Fewer than half of the children achieved first level for writing. By the end of P7, fewer than half the pupils achieved second level in reading, listening and talking, writing and mathematics. There is scope for raising children's attainment across the school. Attainment data collected for this school session continues to identify this and staff now need to track more robustly the attainment of different groups of learners to ensure all children make the best possible progress.
- The school predicts an increase in attainment levels in June 2018 and should now take necessary steps to ensure this happens by providing further clear strategic direction for the development of literacy and numeracy across the school.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Children's progress in literacy and English language is varied across the school and attainment falls sharply at P7. Those children who experience difficulties in developing their literacy skills should be supported to make progress from their prior levels of learning and improve their individual attainment.

Listening and talking

- Across the school most children listen well and respond to adults in a friendly and respectful way. Most children at early level are making good progress at developing their skills in responding to questions and listen to read stories. Children's skills in listening to, responding to and building on the ideas of their peers is limited. Children are unable to identify that listening and talking are core elements of learning. They do not demonstrate a range of skills in listening and talking nor build effectively enough on prior learning.

Reading

- Overall, the majority of children at early and first level read with interest and enjoyment. They are beginning to read with expression and to engage well with written texts. They can talk about their favourite book and author. In a focus group of children working at second level

almost all could read fluently and with expression. They talk confidently about their chosen book and could describe characters and events in the story. They recognise different genres and identify genres associated with certain authors. The school should develop and implement a more consistent strategy to encourage reluctant readers to develop their reading skills.

Writing

- Children in P1 have made a positive start to writing and are developing confidence to write purposefully with an appropriate level of independence. They have opportunities to form letters and patterns in a variety of ways during active play sessions. They are beginning to write using sentence structures with appropriate punctuation such as full stops and capital letters. At first level, children in P4 use note taking to support their writing. They are building banks of commonly used words and learning to spell them. Children in P7 are beginning to write at length across a variety of aspects of genre. Presentation of work in jotters across the school is variable in quality. In the best examples, children are creating interesting characters and showing descriptive detail. The use of success criteria matched to national benchmarks is beginning to support children in developing their skills progressively. Overall the teaching of writing requires a fresh focus to ensure a consistent approach across the school to raise attainment for all children. Across the school expectations of children's writing is not high enough. Teachers should give more consistent, better quality feedback to help children improve their writing and raise attainment.

Attainment in numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, most children are making satisfactory progress in numeracy and mathematics from their previous levels of attainment. However, children's progress in numeracy is too variable across the school. The school tracks the progress of children across all stages. Those children who experience difficulties in developing their numeracy skills should be supported consistently to make progress from their prior levels of learning and improve their individual attainment.

Number, money, measure

- Across the school, children are developing their number skills through a range of approaches. At early level, children are learning to identify coins to £2 and use coins to 10p to pay for items in the class shop. They are becoming confident at counting to 20. A majority of children working at first level add and subtract two-digit numbers with some confidence. They can multiply by two and five and are learning to use the three times table. They can tell time using quarter to and quarter past on analogue clocks. Overall, the majority of children approaching the end of the second level had knowledge and understanding of most aspects of numeracy and mathematics. They were not able to apply their knowledge of numbers to generate number patterns or solve simple algebraic equations. They would benefit from more regular opportunities to apply their understanding of money to real life budgeting contexts.

Shape, position and movement

- At the early level, children are exploring and learning about the properties of 2D shapes. A majority of children identified as approaching secure at first level use mathematical language to accurately describe 2D shapes and 3D objects and their properties. By P7, most children know the properties of a range of 2D shapes and 3D objects. They can discuss the properties

of equilateral, isosceles and right-angle triangles. Children at second level require to consolidate their learning of mathematical language relating to angles. They are learning to use scale drawings to make architectural models of townscapes.

Information handling

- At all stages, children are learning to collect and display data. Children at first level gather information and create simple accurate bar graphs about their level of activity. By the end of second level, children can use a range of diagrams and charts to display information that they have gathered.

Attainment over time

- The schools attainment data showed an increase in attainment in a few areas from May 2015 to May 2016. This was not sustained and attainment appeared to fall in May 2017 particularly at second level where fewer than half of the children achieved expected levels by the end of P7. Moderation has taken place across cluster schools for listening and talking, numeracy and writing. The senior leadership team and staff acknowledge that there is a need to review moderation activities across the school to ensure that teachers have an agreed and shared standard to support assessment judgements. This will ensure children are making appropriate progress across the curriculum and allow timely interventions to support and raise attainment for all children.

Overall quality of learners' achievement

- Children have a variety of opportunities to exercise responsibilities and contribute to the life of the school. In most classes, children undertake duties which help them to develop citizenship skills. Older children are members of the pupil council and meet regularly to discuss school business. The school is working towards achieving an Eco Green flag and children from all stages are represented on the Eco Engineers group. The school is developing the four capacities through a new programme to develop children's skills focussing on activity based challenges which will lead to accreditation. Groups of children regularly visit a lunch club for older community residents. They engage the residents in conversation and entertain them by singing. Working with the community art club children exhibited their paintings in the school hall. Members of the community were invited to look at the exhibits. The school should now explicitly link skills children are learning and how these would be useful in different real life situations such as the in the workplace.
- Most staff know children who are at risk of missing out. This knowledge could be developed further to explore the potential barriers to participation. This approach could also capture the skills children are acquiring through their interests and achievements and how this is taken account of in planning learning. Children are eager to participate in school improvement and in their own learning. The school should explore further ways to increase children's voice in the school.

Equity for all learners

- The school ensures that cost is not a barrier to all children being able to participate in school trips. Funding donated by the Wind Farm Trust is used to enable all children to take part in the summer school trip at no cost to parents. Parents who wish may make a small donation. The school plans to use Pupil Equity Funding for interventions in literacy, numeracy and health and

wellbeing. Enhanced staffing targets support to identified individuals and groups in both literacy and numeracy thus reducing, or removing potential barriers to learning. With the aim of engaging families and communities, the school purchased story sacks, blether bags and homework packs and set up family learning homework clubs. A selection of after school clubs is offered to children, a family club has been set up to encourage whole family participation and links with Alyth Youth Partnership are well established.

Explanation of terms of quality

The following standard Education Scotland terms of quality 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.