

Summarised inspection findings

Stow Primary School

Scottish Borders Council

26 March 2019

Key contextual information

Stow Primary School is a non-denominational school, situated in the village of Stow in the Scottish Borders. The school's provision comprises four primary classes and a nursery class. The primary school has 78 pupils. The senior leadership team comprises an acting headteacher and a principal teacher. The acting headteacher has been in post for 18 months. He is joint acting headteacher of Stow and another local primary school. The school and nursery are located in a building, which was opened in 2000.

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

- The ethos and culture of the school reflects a commitment to children's rights and positive relationships. This is supported by a caring environment, where all staff show a clear commitment to children's welfare and development. Most children enjoy learning at school and feel their teachers are supporting them well in their learning. They are happy in class and show confidence in themselves.
- Most children are motivated and readily participate in their learning experiences. They work well individually, as pairs and in groups. They enjoy their tasks. Most lessons are well matched to learners' needs. There is scope, however, to develop further the level of challenge for higher-achieving children. Children, with additional support needs, are well supported in their learning.
- Pupil voice is a positive aspect of the school. Children's views are sought through a range of activities, including learning surveys and questionnaires, a Twitter board and class feedback about learning. Most children say that the school listens to their views and takes them into account. The school has introduced recently pupil leadership groups, which focus upon sustainability, outdoor learning and digital technology. These groups will provide children with opportunities to develop further their leadership skills.
- Almost all parents value the learning journals and learning overviews, which detail how their child is learning and developing. Parents welcome the information they receive about their child's progress and feel this is shared with them at the right time. A few parents would like the school to organise more activities where they can learn together with their child.
- Overall, the quality of teaching is good. Staff know children well and have achieved an inclusive and supportive learning environment, founded on the school's strong vision, values and aims. Staff manage classes well and use a range of positive strategies to support the wide-range of learners' needs. They use their own skills and interests to lead lessons across the school, within specific curriculum areas including French, religious and moral education (RME) and physical education (PE).

- In almost all lessons, teachers consistently share the purpose of learning with children and discuss with them how they know when they have been successful. There is scope to now involve children further in shaping success criteria. Almost all lessons observed were well organised and the content of tasks relevant for most learners. In almost all lessons, a wide variety of teaching approaches are used. As planned, staff should work collaboratively to engage in the process of devising an effective learning, teaching and assessment strategy in order to continue to improve further children's learning experiences.
- All staff provide clear explanations and instructions during lessons. They take account of individual and group needs in planning tasks, activities and resources used in class. Most tasks and activities are differentiated effectively, and help to meet the needs of children. There is scope for staff to develop further their questioning techniques to promote higher-order thinking skills and encourage children to think more critically.
- Teachers use digital technology well to support learning in classes. This is beginning to be enhanced by use of the digital resources in the newly created Community Learning Hub. Staff have started to make good use of the Career Education Standards 3-18. The school is very well supported by the local community and partners in their approach to developing skills for learning life and work. In moving forward, teachers should continue to ensure children can articulate readily the skills they are developing and their relevance for learning, life and work.
- Children talk confidently about their learning and are involved in assessing their own progress through regularly setting targets to improve aspects of their learning. There is scope to develop this so that children are fully involved in planning their learning and leading their own learning. Most children use formative assessment strategies such as 'thumbs' to provide immediate feedback on how successfully they have understood particular activities. Most were able to evaluate the work of peers and to suggest some helpful next steps. Staff provide helpful oral feedback to children on their performance. Overall, the effectiveness of written feedback to children could be more consistent across all classes to help inform them of their next steps.
- Staff use a variety of information, including formative and summative assessments, and teacher's professional judgement, to provide evidence of children achieving a level. However, the school's approaches to assessment need further development. Whilst staff are assessing specific episodes in learning, there is scope to develop an agreed assessment framework, which identifies a range of planned holistic and periodic assessments. Staff should continue their work to improve moderation practice within the school and with the learning community. This will deepen understanding and consistency of assessing children's progress.
- Senior leaders and staff should continue to develop collaborative and manageable approaches to planning across and within levels. They should include assessment as part of the planning process. Children's progress is monitored regularly and the senior leadership team, class teacher and support for learning staff engage in professional dialogue about children's progress. The main focus of tracking and monitoring approaches is attainment in literacy and numeracy. The school is aware of the need to have clear information on children's progress and attainment for all aspects of the curriculum.

2.1 Safeguarding and child protection

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

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 good. Data provided by the school indicates that most children achieve the appropriate Curriculum for Excellence levels in literacy and numeracy. Evidence gathered as part of inspection activities concurs with the school's judgements in literacy and numeracy.
- The school should now sharpen its focus on how it adds value to attainment. It is the view of inspectors that there remains scope for children across the school to achieve more.

Literacy and English

- Overall, most children are making good progress in English language and literacy. All children in P1, and most children in P4 and P7 are on track to reach appropriate Curriculum for Excellence levels by the end of the current school year.

Reading

- Across the school, most children are making good progress in reading. Children are confident reading aloud and do so with increasing fluency and expression. At early level, most children are making good progress in developing early reading skills. They are learning to recognise letter patterns, sounds, common and rhyming words. Within first and second level, children shared their love of reading and were able to explain why they prefer a particular author or genre. At first level, most children can use the context of text to work out the meaning of words. They share their thoughts on the main ideas, characters and setting. By second level, most children can discuss structure and the writer's style. They show confidence in their ability to analyse texts and can apply a range of reading skills including inferring, distinguishing fact and opinion and predicting to show their understanding of texts. The school is aware of the need to help children achieve more depth of understanding by developing further their higher-order reading skills.

Writing

- Most children are making good progress in writing. At early level, all children are developing good pencil control to form letters and words. Most are beginning to write to convey their experiences and use appropriate supports such as scribing and underwriting to help them write independently. At first and second level, children are given regular opportunities to write and to enhance their skills with short focused activities and extended writing tasks. These activities are supported well by personal targets, and teacher, self and peer assessment. By the end of first level, most children write independently for a range of purposes. They can link sentences well and use appropriate punctuation. They are beginning to use persuasive language to engage the reader. At second level, most children are using more ambitious language and are able to write to influence, explore issues and express opinions. They use paragraphs and appropriate complex punctuation accurately. In all classes, there is

considerable scope to improve the standard of presentation. In order to raise attainment further, and bring greater consistency to expectations across the school, teachers should engage in a structured programme of moderation activities in writing.

Listening and Talking

- Across the school, most children are making good progress in listening and talking. They listen well and respond to each other and adults in a respectful and courteous manner. Almost all children at early level listen and respond appropriately when following instructions about their learning. They interact positively with their teacher and each other, and demonstrate an ability to listen well. At first level, most children can contribute ideas and opinions well and are increasingly able to respond to non-verbal cues. They are respectful of different views and can build on ideas and opinions. Most children at second level communicate clearly, audibly and with increasing expression during structured talking activities. They ask and respond to literal, inferential and evaluative questions and can consider details behind key ideas. In moving forward, children would benefit from more progressive and structured opportunities to develop and enhance their listening and talking skills across the curriculum. More robust approaches to the assessment of listening and talking should be introduced.

Attainment in numeracy

- The school presented a range of data to evidence that most children are making good progress in numeracy and mathematics. There remains scope for children to achieve more, in particular, in the application of learning through open-ended tasks. This will help children to revisit prior learning, and apply this in a range of contexts.

Number money and measurement

- Across the school, most children show good understanding of number processes and place value. Overall, children use this knowledge confidently to carry out calculations appropriate to their stage of development. At early level, almost all children can count forwards and backwards within 20, with a few able to identify and recognise numbers to 100. Almost all children can add to ten. At first level, most children can read, write and order whole numbers to 1,000 and can demonstrate an understanding of zero as a placeholder. Most children can tell the time using digital and analogue clocks. A few can use the correct notation for common fractions and can order fractions on a number line. At second level, most children use confidently the four operations to solve calculations. They can read, write and order sets of decimal fractions to three decimal places. They are developing confidence in working out simple algebraic equations.

Shape position and movement

- At early level, almost all children can recognise common two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects. By first level, most can name, identify and recognise a wide range of two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects. Most children at second level are able to use co-ordinates to describe the location of a point on a grid.

Information handling

- At early level, almost all children can interpret simple graphs. Most children at first level can display data including labelling both axis and using an appropriate scale. At second level, most children can use the language of probability accurately to describe the likelihood of simple events occurring.

Problem solving

- Across the school, children would benefit from more regular and varied problem-solving challenges, which require them to apply their numeracy and mathematical knowledge.

Attainment over time

- Overall, most children are making good progress from prior levels of achievement in literacy and English, and numeracy and mathematics. At the time of inspection, the school was able to provide attainment data for the previous three years. This data is based on teachers' professional judgement and summative and standardised assessments. Staff are building confidence in their professional judgements through opportunities for professional learning and planned moderation activities.
- Over the past 18 months, the school has adopted a revised approach to tracking and monitoring. This provides a useful system to monitor children's progress. Senior leaders, class teachers and support for learning staff meet termly to consider most recent attainment information. They review children's progress and identify appropriate support strategies to support further improvement. In moving forward, greater rigour and more formal recording of next steps now need to be added to these meetings. This will help all staff focus further on the actions required to meet learners' needs.
- Staff do not yet have a clear picture of children's progress across the curriculum. As they develop further progression pathways, they will be able to track children's attainment across all curriculum areas more effectively.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Children at Stow Primary School demonstrate skills as successful and confident learners. They contribute effectively to the life of the school, the wider community and as global citizens. As part of the Year of Young People, the school was awarded the 'Inspire, Enterprise and Regeneration Award' for their commitment and innovative approaches to promoting sustainability. Children are inspired by, and proud of their 'Disruptors' work and articulate confidently how this work is making a difference. Children's achievements in and out of school are celebrated regularly. Displays in school, and use of appropriate social media including the 'Homeroom' celebrate achievements with parents and the wider community.
- Real-life contexts for applying skills and developing achievement play an important role in school life. Parents, carers and community partners work closely with the school to enhance learning experiences. The school recognises that it now needs to consider how achievements across all contexts for learning can be tracked and monitored effectively.

Equity for all learners

- Staff know children, families and their community well and use this knowledge to identify potential barriers to learning. There is a clear commitment to improving equity for all. Staff have been reviewing the cost of the school day and ensuring that all children have equal access to opportunities. They have used the Raising Attainment For All focus and provision from the Pupil Equity Fund to plan for effective interventions. These are monitored regularly and there is emerging evidence that attainment is being raised for identified groups of 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.