

Summarised inspection findings

Dochgarroch Primary School

The Highland Council

12 February 2019

Key contextual information

Dochgarroch Primary is a small rural primary school. It has two, multi-stage composite classes and a nursery class. At the time of the inspection, there were 18 pupils in the primary school. It is one of three primary schools led by the same headteacher. The acting headteacher has been in post since March 2018. There has been a significant turnover of teaching staff over the past two years. Further staffing changes are imminent.

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 staff are committed to ensuring high standards for all children. The values of being respected, responsible and resilient guide the work of the school and are recognised well as 'the 3 R's' by staff and children. Following a recent review of the vision, values and aims, the headteacher has identified the need to develop a new vision, values and aims within the school cluster. Work in relation to this is already underway, including consultation with parents at a recent 'pizza' cluster evening.
- The headteacher is providing strong leadership to the school at a time of significant change. She has a clear understanding of the school and its community and is using this well to inform strategic planning for improvement. She has developed very effective relationships across the school community. Staff and parents are encouraged by the headteacher's positive and enthusiastic leadership in taking the school forward. The headteacher should ensure that new staff are supported to develop their understanding of the school context and its community.
- School improvement planning is appropriately focussed on improving outcomes in literacy and health and wellbeing. A range of self-evaluation activities and data are used well to inform improvement planning. Appropriate use of national guidance informs self-evaluation activities. Well-established partnership working across the school cluster is enabling staff to work collegiately with colleagues from other schools. Collegiate working supports staff to look outwards and learn from practice in others schools. A collegiate calendar is in place to ensure regular opportunities for professional dialogue.
- School improvement priorities appropriately reflect national and local priorities. Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) is focused on raising attainment in literacy and emotional wellbeing. Clear plans are in place for the use and purpose of this funding, including the provision of additional staffing to deliver targeted interventions. Monitoring, tracking and assessment procedures are used well to identify gaps and, over time, measure the impact of targeted and universal interventions. There is some early evidence that interventions are beginning to improve outcomes for children.

- All staff benefit from annual professional review and development. Training needs are closely linked to school improvement priorities and the specific needs of children. There is distributed leadership across the school. All staff have opportunities to lead on aspects of school improvement within the school, and across the cluster. The coaching and mentoring approach employed by the headteacher supports the development of this well. Staff are encouraged to share professional learning with colleagues.
- A quality assurance calendar is in place and includes headteacher and peer observations of learning and teaching. Termly tracking meetings provide opportunities for detailed review of individual children's progress. To ensure continuity and progression for all children, we have asked the school to ensure rigorous approaches to quality assurance are maintained.
- The school has begun to increase the involvement of parents in planning for improvement through the introduction of breakfast surveys. Parents who met with inspectors say their views are listened to and acted upon. Details of school improvement priorities are shared with them. The Parent Council supports school improvement initiatives and feels well informed by the headteacher about the work of the school. The headteacher has identified the potential to involve the Parent Council more in evaluating the impact of the school improvement plan.
- Pupil voice is a strong feature of school improvement. A range of pupil voice groups are in place, including the Eco Community Garden Gang, Garden Gang, Health Committee and Digital Leaders. Several lunchtime clubs are run by older children. The school's own questionnaire analysis shows that most children strongly agree they are involved in making the school better. Children spoke confidently with inspectors about their leadership roles. They feel they are leaders in their school and could clearly identify the difference pupil voice has made.

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

- A warm, nurturing ethos permeates the school. Older children support younger children and show empathy for one another. Positive relationships between staff and children enable most children to be active participants in their learning. Most children are fully engaged in their learning tasks. They interact well with each other when working in pairs and small groups. Most are resilient and eager to learn. The school is beginning to work towards achieving Rights Respecting School status. This forms part of their health and wellbeing action plan for this session.
- The headteacher works closely with staff to ensure children are challenged in their learning. Learning tasks are becoming more appropriately matched to children's needs and interests. Children are becoming more motivated through interesting and challenging activities. Differentiation was evident in almost all lessons observed. The headteacher should ensure that an appropriate pace and challenge in learning is sustained for all children.
- Most children work independently and take responsibility for their own learning. They understand the purpose of their learning. 'Catch-up conversations' enable children to discuss their learning with their teacher on a regular basis. This enables them to reflect on what is going well, what they need to work on, and identify what they would like to learn. As a result, children are growing in confidence in their ability to talk about their success and next steps in learning. Learning intentions are shared in most lessons and supported by appropriate success criteria. There is scope to involve children in the creation of success criteria.
- Children contribute effectively to the life of the school and wider community through a range of activities. They know their views are, valued and acted upon. All children contribute through their involvement in a range of pupil voice groups. These activities include opportunities to extend the learning of others. Digital Leaders support younger children in their use of a robotic toy.
- Overall, the quality of teaching is good. Teachers use praise effectively to recognise and reinforce the application of these values. Commendably, children benefit from the use of a wide range of learning environments, including the school grounds, local community and cluster schools. Staff use the school's rural location to enhance children's engagement in learning. Outdoor learning experiences embed concepts, skills and knowledge over many aspects of the curriculum. Children share their enjoyment of learning in the forest, and articulate how these activities are developing their skills for learning, life and work.
- A range of technology is used to enhance and extend learning. Digital Leaders feel empowered to support others in developing skills in digital technology. They are beginning to develop

leadership skills by providing lunchtime robotics clubs. Older children use tablets and computers confidently to research materials for their enterprise project. There is scope for children to extend the use of technology to support literacy and mathematical activities. The planned rollout of new technology, supported by staff and Digital Leader training next term, will help support this.

- Effective questioning is used by teachers to extend children's thinking and develop their curiosity. Children can explain their thinking and provide reasons for their answers. Teachers observe children closely to check their understanding and provide appropriate and timely support. They use the outcomes of a range of formative assessment strategies well to inform interventions and future learning.
- Termly meetings between the headteacher and class teachers, supported by detailed analysis of attainment data, informs teachers' planning. There is evidence that these meetings are leading to more appropriate support and challenge. This needs to be built upon and sustained through continuing support for staff.
- Teachers use a variety of assessment approaches to track children's progress in learning. Although children set personal learning targets, some children do not fully understand the purpose or relevance to these.
- Opportunities to moderate children's work and plan collegiately are provided across the cluster. Staff are aware of the national benchmarks and use these to inform their planning. They are developing their understanding and use of holistic assessment. As further staff changes take place, it will be important to sustain this approach to ensure a shared understanding of standards. The headteacher has identified the need to continue developing confidence in professional judgement by extending these opportunities for collegiate working beyond the cluster.
- Teachers plan appropriately over different timescales. They are guided by a range of curricular frameworks, which they use to inform progression in learning. Children contribute to the planning process, particularly in relation to inter-disciplinary learning. Children are provided with opportunities to exercise choice in their learning.
- Effective planning is in place for children facing additional barriers to learning. Where appropriate, these plans are drawn up in partnership with other agencies and partners. Parents and children contribute to this planning process. These plans are subject to regular review, the outcomes of which are used to inform the effectiveness of interventions.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- The school has identified the need to review its curriculum rationale to ensure that it reflects the unique context of Dochgarroch Primary School. As planned, this work should reflect the school's current curricular developments, including digital technology and Developing the Young Workforce (DYW).
- Staff use a range of learning pathways to ensure progression in learning. Curriculum pathways are in place for literacy, numeracy, health and wellbeing and science. These promote continuity and progression and are used flexibly to meet the needs of all learners. A three-year curriculum cycle takes account of all Curriculum for Excellence experiences and outcomes to ensure breadth of learning. This cycle includes opportunities for interdisciplinary learning. The curriculum takes appropriate account of the Curriculum for Excellence design principles. Children have some personalisation and choice in their learning. Older children are involved in 'My World of Work' and are developing their understanding of skills for learning, life and work. The use of real-life, relevant contexts for learning, such as enterprise projects, is resulting in children's enjoyment and engagement in learning.
- Children have good opportunities to learn in a range of outdoor contexts using the local environment. This is enhanced through effective partnership working with Scottish Waterways, Jacobite Cruises and Abriachan Forest Trust. This supports children at P4 to P7 in the annual John Muir environmental award scheme. There is scope to develop this further, ensuring a well-planned, clear skills progression across outdoor learning activities.
- The headteacher has identified the need to increase the use of digital technology to enhance the curriculum and develop skills. Plans are well established for taking this forward later in the session.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- The school has developed very strong partnership with parents and families. All parents feel welcome in the school. Most parents feel that the school provides opportunities to be involved in their child's learning. A wide range of approaches is used to inform parents of the work of the school. These include open afternoons, 'bring your parent to school' learning conversations and curricular events.
- The school seeks the view of parents to inform self-evaluation and school improvement. In a recent homework survey, all parents agreed that the school had explained how they could support their child's homework. The involvement of parents is clearly identified within the school improvement plan, with a particular focus on increasing family engagement to support wellbeing this session. This includes activities such sharing assemblies and a programme of 'Family Natters' events.

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

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

- The very strong sense of community across the school provides a positive, nurturing ethos for children and staff. Staff have a very good understanding of children and their families. They are responsive to the wellbeing needs of all children. Parents find staff supportive and approachable and feel their views are valued and respected. Children are very caring and respectful of each other. P7 children receive training that enables them to support the wellbeing of others. This support helps underpin the school's value of 'resilience'. Plans are in place to roll this approach out across the school. The school should take forward its plans to gain 'Rights Respecting School' status.
- The development of health and wellbeing is a high priority within the school's improvement plan. Children have a strong understanding of the wellbeing indicators. They describe, with confidence, what these mean and how the school supports their wellbeing needs. All children report that they feel safe in school. They are confident they can speak to someone in school if they have a problem. Children have shared their knowledge of the wellbeing indicators with parents. Parents confirm their knowledge of the wellbeing indicators has increased as a result.
- Staff take a structured approach to identifying and supporting children's wellbeing. As a result, they have a strong understanding of children's wellbeing needs. Daily emotional check-ins help children to be reflective about their feelings. Regular catch-up conversations between staff and children focus on children's progress in relation to the wellbeing indicators. This is used to inform targeted interventions. This comprehensive approach is developing a streamlined process to supporting and evaluating wellbeing. As planned, the school should now develop this good practice further to include all children.
- Creative approaches are being developed to overcome the school's lack of a gym hall in order to support the delivery of physical education. This includes using outdoors, the hall of a cluster school, and using the facilities of the local high school. All children participate in a 15-minute daily run. All children have recently participated in a block of swimming lessons. The headteacher should continue to monitor the provision of physical education to ensure that all children receive the minimum national guidance of two hours quality physical education per week.
- The school has a health and wellbeing curriculum planner in place. Health and wellbeing is also developed through inter-disciplinary learning and forms an integral part of the school's three year planning cycle. The school has identified the need to review the health and wellbeing curriculum and should take this forward as planned. Effective use is made of the local environment to support learning about safety. Younger children learn about identifying dangers on the canal before visiting the canal adjacent to the school grounds. The older

children participate in a traffic survey near the school to contextualise learning during Road Safety Week.

- Effective transition processes are in place for children starting school, and when they move from P7 to S1. As a result of the nursery class being an integral feature of the school building, children experience very positive transitions to P1. Information sessions are provided for parents to support this transition. Strong partnership working across the cluster provides P6 and P7 children with regular opportunities to learn with children from other schools. A cluster residential experience helps build positive relationships. Staff and young leaders from Charleston Academy support learning in the older class. For example, young science leaders from the Charleston Academy delivered a session for P4–P7 children about microscopes.
- Effective and consistent approaches to behaviour management are making a difference to children's learning experiences across the school. Effective strategies are in place to support children requiring support to manage their emotions and their response to that emotion.

Statutory

- 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. There is a shared expectation of what is expected and how this might affect children and families. Robust systems are in place to support child protection procedures.

Inclusion and equality

- The school makes effective use of the Highland Practice Model to ensure appropriate planning and interventions are in place for children facing barriers to learning. Parents feel actively involved in the child planning process. They feel that their views are listened to and welcome the opportunity to meet regularly with the school. The headteacher ensures that the views of the child are heard and used to inform the planning and review process. As a result, children are well supported.
- Effective partnership working with a range of partners and agencies is helping to upskill staff to support specific learning needs. Commendably, staff have undertaken accredited training to ensure they have the necessary specialist skills.
- Staff know children and families very well and are proactive in removing barriers to participation and engagement. For example, the school will provide transport for children and families who require it.
- All children feel included and supported to do their best. Diversity is valued and the curriculum provides planned opportunities to explore diversity and challenge racism. Children understand diversity and can relate this to novels they have read and television programmes they have watched.

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

Overall attainment in literacy and numeracy

- Overall, the data presented by the school demonstrates that most children are achieving appropriate Curriculum for Excellence levels in literacy and numeracy. Monitoring of attainment indicates that the majority of children are on track to achieve the expected Curriculum for Excellence level. From inspection activity, we agree with the school's attainment predictions.
- To ensure continuity and progression, the headteacher has worked hard to ensure that a robust assessment overview is in place for every child. These overviews provide a clear summary of children's strengths and development needs. Based on a detailed analysis of a range of assessment data, gaps in learning, support strategies and next steps for each child has been identified. The headteacher should ensure this information is used effectively by teachers to raise attainment for all learners, ensuring continuity in learning.
- Effective procedures are in place to monitor and track the progress of children with additional barriers to learning. School evidence suggests that the majority of children with additional support needs are attaining appropriately.

Literacy and English

- Overall attainment in literacy is good. The majority of children are making satisfactory progress in all areas of literacy and English.

Reading

- Overall children's attainment in reading is good. The majority of children across the school enjoy reading and make personal choices about what they like to read. At the early level, most children are learning to identify common words, using their knowledge of sounds and letters to read words. At first and second levels, most children can read with fluency and expression, using appropriate pace and tone. Although regular opportunities for reading for pleasure are provided, there is scope to develop this further, particularly with boys.

Writing

- Overall children's attainment in writing is satisfactory. There are indications of an emerging increased pace in progress, particularly in relation to the early level. They write imaginatively, using appropriate vocabulary and sentence structure relevant to their age and stage. Across the school, the standard of presentation of work should be improved. More opportunities should be provided for children to write at length and across a range of genres, including the use of digital technologies. The school identifies the need to improve the standard of spelling across all levels. Based on research, the school identified an appropriate intervention. This is being implemented across the school as a priority this session. Children's progress is being

carefully monitored to measure the impact of this intervention. It is too early to determine impact. However, early indications are positive.

Talking and listening

- Attainment in listening and talking is good. Across the school, most children speak confidently and articulately. At the early level, the majority of children listen and take turns appropriately when talking in groups. At first and second levels, children can justify their answers. They have opportunities to present information more formally to an audience.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Overall attainment in numeracy and mathematics is good. Most children are making appropriate progress in numeracy and mathematics.

Number, money and measure

- At early level, children can read, write and order numbers appropriate to their age and stage. They understand the difference between odd and even numbers. At second level, children are developing their understanding of profit and loss through their Christmas enterprise project. They research and compare costs of resources for their project using a range of digital platforms.

Shape, position and movement

- At second level, children have a sound knowledge of angles. They use the correct mathematical language, including acute, obtuse, straight and reflex to describe and classify a range of angles.

Information handling

- Across the school, the majority of children have an understanding of bar graphs and how to interpret data as appropriate to their age. Children have had limited experience of using a range of strategies to handle data. A few can use pie charts. Children relate their learning to real-life situations and across curricular areas. For example, children undertook a traffic survey on the main road near their school as part of their learning relating to Road Safety Week. There is scope to extend these further, providing children with increased opportunities to handle and interpret information.

Attainment over time

- The school uses Curriculum for Excellence data and standardised assessment to inform professional judgement about children's progress. Regular opportunities for staff to moderate children's work with colleagues from across the cluster of schools is provided. This is beginning to strengthen teachers' confidence in their professional judgement.
- The headteacher has developed effective systems to track and monitor data. These systems provide a whole school overview, in addition to child-specific information. There is scope for these to be extended further to provide greater clarity on children's progress over time. The school has identified the need to plan more carefully how improvement in attainment can be measured. This will help inform the impact of targeted and universal interventions.
- The school has a sustained focus on raising attainment in numeracy. This is resulting in positive outcomes for children. The use of numeracy diagnostic assessments is resulting in teachers feeling confident about where children are in their learning, and what they need to do to make progress. Analysis of standardised assessments demonstrates that the gap in attainment for some children has been reduced.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- There is a range of opportunities within the school for children to develop the four capacities of Curriculum for Excellence. All children are involved in pupil voice groups. Most children speak confidently about their contribution to the school community. Their participation in charity initiatives, such as raising funds to build a school in Malawi, is increasing their understanding of the world.
- The school actively encourages parents and children to share their wider achievements in school. These are recognised and celebrated at assemblies, through the school newsletter, and displays. Staff and pupils know the particular skills and interests of children well. Some children are achieving notable success in relation to sporting and musical activities. Children's wider achievements within and beyond the school are tracked and monitored by the headteacher. The school is beginning to use this information to ensure no child misses out.
- On an annual basis, children between P4 and P7 have an opportunity to participate in John Muir awards. Partners supporting this work value the school's high level of commitment to the experiences provided. The school should now track children's progress in relation to their skills development so that it contributes to the overall tracking of children's progress and achievement.

Equity for all learners

- Staff have a clear understanding of the socio-economic background of all children, and seek to provide appropriate interventions to address individual children's needs. The headteacher demonstrates an understanding of different factors that may affect equity in a rural community. She has a clear understanding of the gaps in attainment of children from differing socio-economic background.
- Additional staffing has been funded by PEF to improve attainment. This is enabling interventions to support the development of literacy and emotional wellbeing. Interventions are tailored to meet the specific needs of identified children. Initial evidence shows signs of improvement in children's reading comprehension.
- A targeted, proactive approach to raising attainment is resulting in raised levels of attendance.

Choice of QI: 3.3 Creativity and employability

- Creativity skills
- Digital innovation
- Digital literacy
- Increasing employability skills

- Developing a culture of creativity through pedagogy formed a key development priority in last year's school improvement plan. A 'Creative Champion' supports creativity at Dochgarroch Primary School and its cluster schools. The school is at the early stages of embedding the 'Career Education Standard (3–18)'. To address this, increasing the awareness of DYW is one of four key school improvement priorities in the current session. A 'skills for careers' framework is now included in Pupil Profiles to enable children to begin to track their skill progression. Some older children can articulate clearly their understanding of DYW.
- The school works effectively with a range of partners to develop skills for learning, life and work. Children speak enthusiastically about team-building activities in local woodland. They relate this to the development of specific skills. Parents and employers support an event to enhance children's understanding of the world of work. Partnership working across the cluster and associated school group (ASG) is enhancing the range of activities children at Dochgarroch Primary School can experience. P6 and P7 children participate in a DYW ASG transition project. DYW has been the focus for staff training across the ASG this session.
- Children have opportunities to take ownership of their learning. Children in the older class are highly engaged and motivated by their involvement in a real-life enterprise project. This enables the development of a range of relevant skills. They were preparing business plans, learning about profit and loss and sourcing materials while working within a set budget. Children work well in groups, using digital technology confidently to undertake product research. They question each other, solve problems and justify their point of view in order to negotiate an agreed outcome.
- The headteacher has a vision to create a digital culture across the school. Older pupils have the opportunity to be Digital Leaders within the school. They help promote the use of a range of technology. Lunchtime digital clubs provide an opportunity for Digital Leaders to share their plan and lead lunchtime clubs for the other children. As planned, the school should continue to develop its use of digital technologies, including the development of online safety, supported by training for staff and Digital Leaders.

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.