Summarised inspection findings

Dallas Primary School

Moray Council

17 December 2019

Key contextual information

Dallas Primary School is a two class school situated in the village of Dallas near Forres in Moray Council. At the time of the inspection the school roll was 26 and the headteacher had a teaching commitment. Community links are strong and the curriculum reflects very well the principles of Curriculum for Excellence. Last session there was instability in staffing with a number of temporary teachers working at the school.

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

■ Dallas Primary School has a positive culture of learning where relationships are of a consistently high standard between children and staff. Children enjoy learning in the nurturing and inclusive learning environment. Strong peer relationships are evident in a variety of curriculum contexts. Children work effectively together, support one another, reflecting the school's values and of being 'neighbourly'. Children are articulate and take great pride in their school, their local community and have high aspirations for their future.

■ The outdoor learning environment, such as the local woods and school garden, offer motivating and varied opportunities for learning. The application of learning to explore the Dallas floods offers children meaningful contexts for their learning. This represents an important strength of the school. Learners' experiences are greatly enriched through effective partnership working and reciprocal community involvement. Local community projects such as the Moray Food Bank and Findhorn Bay Arts Festival provide interesting and meaningful contexts for learning. In addition, visiting specialists contribute significantly to children's learning. They are skilled practitioners with extensive subject specialist knowledge.

■ In almost all classes, teachers provide clear explanations and instructions. They use high quality technical and subject specific vocabulary across learning. In a majority of lessons, teachers demonstrate skilled use of questioning to support children to develop higher order thinking. Teachers share the purpose of lessons and discuss with children what they need to do to be successful. Although the quality of this approach is variable, teachers share the purpose of lessons across all areas of the curriculum and provide children with opportunities for children to create their own success criteria. At the start of a block of learning children co-create targets in each curriculum area which they regularly revisit. In literacy and numeracy children learn in groups identified through formative assessment. This involves mixed age groupings with children showing high levels of support for one another. Across the school, children are continuing to develop skills in talking about themselves as learners in literacy, numeracy across the curriculum.

■ The headteacher has identified the need to improve consistency in the quality of teaching across the school. She is planning on sharing with staff her professional knowledge of

pedagogical approaches such as outdoor learning and play and the positive impact of these on children's progress and attainment. In a few lessons, learning is overly task-oriented and tasks and activities are not always well-matched to the needs of all children within the multi-stage composite groupings of the classes. For some older children, outwith literacy and numeracy, they do not experience challenging texts due to the planning for the multistage composite classes. Teachers need to develop their approaches to differentiation to ensure that tasks and activities are better matched to the needs of all children. The school should take forward its plans for professional learning and sharing good practice leading to improved universal support for all children.

■ The headteacher uses a range of summative assessment data to identify children's strengths, areas for improvement and to plan interventions. These are used to inform the school's useful tracking system to address gaps in children's learning. The school's approaches to tracking and monitoring are not yet sufficiently effective. Children's progress through Curriculum for Excellence pathways is not planned for consistently across the school. Staff over rely on standardised assessment as the main indicator of progress. They need to continue to plan for learning and effective use of assessment to inform children's next steps in learning.

■ Moderation activities, arranged through the local authority to verify standards are at early stage of development. Moderation approaches need to be developed further and used in an on-going basis within the planning and implementation 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. 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	

■ The school roll is small and therefore numbers of children at each stage in the school are small. The curriculum supports children well in applying their learning to real life situations across the four contexts for learning.

■ The school reviews data regularly to raise attainment in literacy and numeracy. Teachers use Scottish National Standardised Assessment (SNSA) diagnostically to plan interventions for individual children and whole school strategies. A whole school approach to improving children's comprehension has resulted in children reading more widely for pleasure.

Attainment over time
■ The school's tracking approaches do not demonstrate improvements in children's progress through Curriculum for Excellence levels over time. The introduction of The Moray Tracking system will be a positive development for the school. The school's use of commercially produced standardised assessment information shows improvements in selected measures.

Attainment in literacy

Listening and talking
■ Across the school, children make good progress in listening and talking. The structured approach to listening and talking provides opportunities for children to apply their listening and talking skills across the four contexts for learning. Children teach parents how to learn new skills at 'Kids Teach' sessions. Most children are articulate, skilled at listening and talking and use a wide range of technical and subject based vocabulary.

■ At early and first level, children take turns and discuss the activities they are involved in. At second level, children describe what they need to do to achieve their dreams in a way that engages with the audience. They use appropriate vocabulary to explain their aspirations and share information in a logical order. They successfully answer questions, clarify points and support other's ideas. They know about word choice, tone and rhetorical questions. Children hear high quality technical vocabulary in their learning which they accurately apply when talking about activities they enjoy doing. They talk about growth mindset and metacognition.

Reading
■ Children's progress in reading is satisfactory. At early level, children use tactile materials to consolidate initial sounds and blend simple words. At first level, children use digital technologies well to record their responses to inferential questions based on texts that they read. This improves their comprehension skills and capacity as reflective readers. They read with expression and use punctuation marks well to change the intonation in their voices. At second level, children read regularly for enjoyment. They identify main characters, describe

settings, identify arising issues and predict endings. At second level, they use illustrations and text to make predictions. Staff need to ensure children continue to extend their reading for enjoyment, improve fluency and comprehension as indicated within the school improvement plan. Children are not sufficiently skilled in reading high quality texts in all aspects of their learning.

Writing

■ Children's progress in writing is satisfactory. At early and first level, children write about relevant contexts using appropriate vocabulary to show the process of sustainable foods. At second level, children create posters to persuade children across the school to recycle and reduce plastics in the ocean. They describe their hobbies using positive and persuasive text. They write in first person narrative using direct speech, paragraphs and emotive vocabulary. The quality of children's writing needs to improve. Teachers should raise expectations in what children are expected to achieve, and improve written feedback to help them understand their strengths and next steps in learning.

Numeracy

■ Overall children are making satisfactory progress in numeracy and mathematics. A few children are exceeding expected Curriculum for Excellence levels.

Number, money and measurement

■ Across the school, children are developing their understanding of place, value and number processes well. Staff recognise the need to develop children's skills in mental agility and the need to go beyond recall of knowledge. As a result, the school has re-established daily numerical thinking lessons in an effort to improve mental agility. Across the school, children have good knowledge and understanding of time and measurement. They use the language of time and represent o'clock times on a clock face. Staff need to improve children's skills in interpreting questions and carrying out word based problems that require multi-step approaches.

Shape, position and movement

■ Children's knowledge and understanding of shape, position and movement is too variable across the school. Although they recognise 2D shapes and 3D objects, they are less proficient in describing their properties. Teachers increasingly using learning outdoors as a useful and relevant context to explore concepts such as direction and the compass points. As a result, children have a sound understanding of these concepts.

Information handling

■ From the early level, children collect objects and ask questions to gather information, organising and displaying findings in different ways. As they move through levels, they extract key information from a variety of datasets and display their findings using appropriate headings. Children should be supported to draw conclusions about the reliability of data.

Other curriculum areas

Literacy across learning

■ At second level, children apply their literacy skills in art. They write imaginative stories using art as a stimulus. A few analyse and interpret paintings forming a story based on the image very well. They use their imagination to infer the characters motives. They apply their literacy skills advertising the school fair confidently using social media as a tool for communicating the event. They know what is needed for successful advertising campaigns.

- Children across the school are beginning to understand what it means to be a good learner. They know about metacognition and how this applies to them as an individual.

Physical education
- At second level, children understand stamina and develop fitness over time including strength. They create graphs showing progress. In orienteering they know the points of the compass and follow directions using a map.

Technologies
- In computing science, children create programs to make working musical instruments from cardboard and copper coins. A commercial kit programmed by the children, enables a current to connect via cables with the computer when the copper coins are touched.

Music
- In music at early, first and second levels, children read musical notation and create their own musical scores which they play using percussion instruments.

Overall quality of achievement
- Achievement beyond formally assessed learning in the classroom, takes a range of forms across the school. Children talk very positively about their participation and achievements in a commendably wide range of opportunities. These experiences for children reflect the school's curriculum rationale well. Children gain an impressive range of skills through leadership and team working. Children are also developing attributes and skills through charity fundraising, voluntary work in their local community through Hi5 awards and the pupil council. Children have also achieved success in local competitions such as the 'junior tattie scone contest'. Children are developing the skills and attributes of the four capacities very well to become successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors. Children's successes are also well recognised and celebrated effectively through certificates, displays and the 'Golden Owl'. The headteacher recognises the need to create an established system to record children's achievements.

Equity for all
- The inclusive nature of the school promotes equity for all children. This is evident through the curriculum, planned interventions and excursions.

Practice worth sharing more widely

The rationale and design of the curriculum provides a well-structured backdrop across the four contexts for children to apply their learning. Relevant learning features across the curriculum with a good use of the local community. The school is developing the reliability of staff professional judgement to show children's progress.

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.