

Summarised inspection findings

Crathie Primary School

Aberdeenshire Council

27 June 2023

Key contextual information

Crathie Primary School is a small, rural school located in Upper Deeside. It serves the rural communities of Balmoral, Abergeldie and Invercauld estates. At the time of the inspection, there were 11 children on the school roll across P1, P2, P3, P4, P6 and P7 stages. Children are taught in one mixed-aged class. Almost all children on the school roll live within Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation decile 7. Attendance is above the national average. The headteacher has overall leadership responsibility for both Crathie Primary School and Strathdon Primary School. At Crathie Primary School, the headteacher is supported by a principal teacher.

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 headteacher and all staff share a deep commitment to children's wellbeing and rights. Staff ensure that the school is a nurturing and caring place, where all children feel safe, respected and trusted. Relationships between children and all staff are extremely positive. Children are very supportive of each other and proud of their collective and individual achievements. The school's vision, 'small school, big dreams' and values of care, respect, achievement, trust and happiness are clearly understood and demonstrated by all children. Children are very proud of their school and community. They take part enthusiastically in many aspects of wider school life and local community projects. They regularly take responsibility, lead projects and influence change. Children are currently working in partnership with Aberdeenshire Council to improve the car parking at their school. Children know adults in school seek, value and act on their opinions.
- The headteacher and all staff know children very well as individuals. Staff are committed to improving outcomes for all children. They work together very effectively to support learning for all children, successfully creating a learning environment which is calm and purposeful. Children have an appropriate balance of well-planned opportunities to work individually, in pairs and as a group throughout the day. Teachers support children to understand the relevance and purpose of their learning and wider school experiences. Children help teachers to select exciting, relevant contexts and topics that they want to explore and research. Their learning is often related to the unique context of living near Balmoral Castle and Estate.
- Almost all children engage very well in their learning, showing resilience and determination to succeed. They have individual targets that provide them with clear direction on how they can improve their own work. They enjoy helping to maintain personal learning journey folders that contain examples of their best work and demonstrate the breadth of their learning. Staff use class displays effectively, highlighting helpful strategies to support children in their current learning. They also use displays well to evidence children's progress with their learning across the curriculum. Most children explain confidently their thinking and the strategies they use. Children speak positively about key skills they develop through learning activities. Teachers

should, as planned, review the school's skills progression framework. This should support further children to build on, extend and apply similar skills developed at previous stages.

- All children benefit from access to an individual digital device. Children make very good use of technology to support their learning. Older children use devices and technologies confidently and independently, for example to type their stories and carry out research. All children enjoy using a range of relevant online games and apps to extend and consolidate their learning. Teachers ensure technical skills are developed progressively and children are becoming more confident in the creation of their own digital materials. Through ongoing professional learning, teachers should continue to develop creative approaches to using digital technology to enhance the quality of children's learning experiences.
- Outdoor learning is an important feature of learning and teaching at Crathie Primary School. Staff make very good use of the school grounds and nearby woodland to provide children with exciting contexts to learn. They plan high-quality activities which provoke interest and support children to explore. Children are very knowledgeable about their local environment and they enjoy learning about sustainability. All children learn to grow a wide range of fruit and vegetables in the school garden. Staff help children to use these to prepare healthy meals. Children are developing skills and qualities as global citizens through high-quality learning for sustainability. Children gain National Gardening and John Muir awards. They work closely with the ranger from Balmoral Castle and Estate, learning about and caring for local trees. Staff should continue with their plans to develop an outdoor learning pathway to guide their planning for children's skills progression across all stages.
- Teachers ensure that an extensive range of partners are invited into school to share their expertise and skills with children. This adds value to children's experiences and enriches their learning. Children engage in regular discussion with partners about their jobs and the skills they use to do their job well. Children are learning successfully about the world of work, job possibilities and how the skills they learn in school will support them in their future. Teachers have developed very helpful links with teachers in the local high school and nearby primary schools. Children benefit by learning alongside new friends from a wider peer group through a series of carefully planned joint-school events. Parents feel that this supports children well for moving on to high school. They are pleased that opportunities for children to meet and learn alongside others are increasing.
- Children across P1 to P7 enjoy regular opportunities to engage in play-based learning both inside and outdoors. Teachers are working with children to create learning spaces to improve further play-based learning opportunities. Staff should engage with national guidance and professional learning to support the further development of play. This should help teachers plan play activities that allow all children to deepen and extend their learning, appropriate to their stage of development and learning needs.
- Teachers share the purpose and skills of learning effectively and almost all children identify how to be successful in lessons. They support children well to contribute to class discussion by providing prompts to help them structure their responses. Teachers do this skilfully and respectfully to ensure children are fully included in all aspects of the lesson. They ensure a good balance between direct teaching, collaborative activities and independent learning. This enables teachers to allocate time to teach groups of children within the mixed-age class. A few children would benefit from more challenge in their learning.
- Teachers use praise well and share examples of good work to encourage and support children's learning. Most children talk confidently about their learning and what being successful looks like, as a result. Teachers use plenary sessions successfully with children to

demonstrate learning and celebrate successes. Children have regular opportunities to peer- and self-assess their work. Teachers' written feedback to help children improve their work and identify next steps is variable. Teachers should ensure feedback on children's work, supports children to understand better what they need to do to improve. As part of this, children need greater opportunities to act on the feedback provided.

- Teachers are developing their approaches in using summative and formative assessment information to assess children's progress in learning. They track children's progress across all curricular areas. Senior leaders and staff have termly meetings to review children's progress. Across the school, there are children who require more challenge in their learning. Although teachers use a range of assessments, these are not yet an integral part of planning. The headteacher should support teachers to review and improve how they use assessment to inform planned learning. This should help ensure all children are challenged appropriately in their learning.
- Teachers plan learning together over different timescales, including long- and short-term plans. They take real-life global and community issues into account where possible. This is helping children to understand their local community and the world in which they live. Teachers use a mix of school and local authority curriculum pathways to inform their planning. Although aspects of planning take account of children's age and stage of development, this is not always evident in plans. Teachers need to strengthen their planning across all areas for curriculum ensuring it is balanced and builds on children's prior learning.
- Teachers engage in the moderation of writing with other schools. They should continue to engage in regular moderation activities with other schools to develop further their understanding of expected levels in writing and other areas of the curriculum. This will strengthen further the robustness of teacher's professional judgements in relation to children's progress and attainment.

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

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

- Attainment and progress will be expressed in 'overall' statements, rather than for specific year groups or Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels. This is because of the very small numbers of children at each stage.

Attainment in literacy and numeracy

- Overall, attainment across the school in literacy and English is good. Most children achieve appropriate CfE levels in literacy. A few children are capable of achieving more. Attainment and progress in numeracy and mathematics is very good. Children who require some extra support in their learning, are attaining well for their individual levels of need. Parents feel that their children are very well supported by staff at Crathie Primary School. They very much appreciate the individual encouragement and attention that their children receive from staff. They value the high-quality information they receive about their children's progress.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, most children are making good progress in listening and talking and reading. The majority of children are making good progress in writing. A few could make better progress in writing.

Listening and Talking

- All children are respectful of each other's views and opinions when working together in pairs or small groups. Staff plan interesting and exciting themes and discussion points that motivate children to share their ideas and opinions. Younger children take turns during class discussions. They are becoming increasingly confident in asking questions to find out more information. Older children build on the opinions and views of others during group work successfully. They discuss confidently the skills required to talk to an audience.

Reading

- Children enjoy reading and make personal choices about what they like to read. They benefit from a cosy library area and have access to a good range of reading materials. Children share their favourite authors and can explain their reasons why. Younger children are developing their knowledge of sounds and beginning to blend with increasing confidence. Older children, as appropriate to their age and stage, read well with fluency and expression. They talk confidently about main ideas in a text and demonstrate a sound understanding of setting and characters.

Writing

- Children have regular opportunities to write across a range of genres. This is often stimulated by stories, learning outdoors and real-life events. Younger children use a capital letter and a full stop in at least one sentence. They make an attempt to spell familiar words correctly. Older

children organise writing in a logical order with increasing confidence. Children should create individualised writing targets, supported by teachers, to ensure they use appropriate punctuation, structure and increasingly complex vocabulary. This will help improve children's attainment in writing. Children should continue to have regular practice in developing their handwriting and presentation skills, at all stages across the school. Older children need increased opportunities to write at length.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Almost all children are making very good progress in numeracy and mathematics. Teachers provide rich, engaging, planned experiences which support children to develop their knowledge, grow in confidence and apply their numeracy skills in real life contexts.

Number, money and measure

- Younger children recognise a range of numbers, count forwards and backwards in sequence and add and subtract with increasing confidence. Older children identify place value of numbers accurately and show confidence when rounding. They use multiplication and division facts to solve problems. They are building confidence when applying their understanding of fractions. Daily mental maths is providing children with regular opportunities to apply a range of strategies to solve problems.
- Teachers plan regular opportunities for children to apply their numeracy skills across their learning. Teachers plan worthwhile interdisciplinary tasks that enable children to apply their learning in practical mathematics. For example, children measure accurately the growth of vegetables in their garden. Staff are helping children to see the relevance of their learning in numeracy and its link to skills for life and work.

Shape, position and movement

- Across the school, children are confident in naming and discussing the properties of two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects appropriate to their age and stage. Children are developing appropriate vocabulary of position and movement when describing the location of items in relation to one another.

Information handling

- Children sort and display data in a variety of different ways. They know how to collect information using tally marks and display their data in graphs and charts. Older children select independently the correct scale to use for graphs. They work together regularly to analyse, interpret and draw conclusions from data. Children should now develop their skills in using digital technology further to collect and display information, such as using electronic spreadsheets.

Attainment over time

- Given the small school roll and changing cohorts of children each year, attainment over time is a varied picture. Staff track the progress individual children are making in line with CfE levels. Overall, children are supported well to make good progress over time, in both literacy and numeracy, from their prior levels of attainment. Staff are increasing in confidence when making professional judgements of achievement of a level. The planned increase in regular opportunities for moderation with colleagues from other schools should support staff to develop their skills further.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Staff use a range of approaches to support children to develop the four capacities of CfE. They do this through the life and work of the school and worthwhile local partnerships. For example, children managed the baggage tent at the local running event. They demonstrated high levels

of organisation and good communication skills. Children also participate in programmes such as Eco-Schools Scotland. This helps children to develop their understanding of wider global issues and consider the needs of others.

- Across the school, children develop skills in independence, resilience and teamwork through regular outdoor activities and trips. Children demonstrate their creativity and enterprising skills by organising and leading whole school events, such as the French café. Older children enjoy taking on further roles of responsibility such as 'Young Leaders'. They successfully plan and lead sporting activities including rugby skills. They create games for younger children to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of fractions.
- Staff recognise and celebrate children's successes and achievements both in and out of school, in a range of ways. Children feel proud when their work is displayed on the 'Progress Wall'. Teachers enhance children's skills and experiences through taking part in national competitions. All children benefit from this approach. Working together as a school community, children have achieved many awards, such as Digital Schools award and Gold Rights Respecting Schools award. Children are very knowledgeable about their rights and talk positively about how these link to the work of the school.

Equity for all learners

- The headteacher and staff have a strong focus on social inclusion. They have a clear understanding of the socio-economic background of children and families. They strive to ensure that children in Crathie Primary School have access to a full range of curriculum experiences and wider achievements. The headteacher has well-established financial arrangements in place to ensure every child is able to engage fully in all aspects of school life and activities whatever their personal circumstances. For example, skiing, swimming lessons and all trips are fully funded. Staff make the most of all opportunities to involve children in a wide range of activities and local community projects. This includes visitors being invited into school, shared learning experiences with nearby schools and children participating in the community Christmas church service. These experiences enrich children's learning and provide opportunities to achieve success in a variety of ways.

Other relevant evidence

- Children learn through a progressive religious and moral education programme across the school. Children participate in religious observance through services delivered by the school's minister.
- Children learn French across the school, building appropriately on prior learning to develop their listening, talking and writing skills as they progress through the school. Children from P3 to P7 learn Spanish as their third language.
- All children receive their entitlement to two hours high-quality physical education (PE) each week. PE lessons are taught by class teachers using a progression framework.
- All children participate in weekly music lessons delivered by a specialist teacher. Older children are provided with regular opportunities to experience and learn to play musical instruments. They are developing their skills in reading music as they learn to play the piano and string instruments. Children who choose to further their musical interests, benefit from working with a visiting musical instructor.

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.