

# Summarised inspection findings

**Whiteness Primary School**

Shetland Islands Council

17 September 2024

## Key contextual information

Whiteness Primary School is situated approximately 10 miles west of Lerwick, the main town in Shetland, and serves the districts of Whiteness, Weisdale and surrounding areas. The headteacher took up post in August 2015. She has overall strategic responsibility for Whiteness nursery class. The headteacher has a 0.3 full time equivalent teaching commitment in the nursery.

At the time of inspection, the school roll is 64 children, organised across three classes. There is a part-time additional support needs teacher. There are visiting teachers who specialise in music, art and physical education (PE). There are four learning support workers and one play support worker. Almost all of the school roll live in decile 8 of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation. Approximately 40% of children on the school roll have an additional support need and 11% are entitled to free school meals.

### 2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

**very 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

- Children benefit from the highly positive and caring relationships across the school. All staff ensure the school's vision and values are clearly evident and underpin approaches to learning and teaching very well. Children demonstrate a very good understanding of how the school's values support them to develop and practise kindness and respect for themselves and others. They are welcoming and respectful to each other, adults and visitors to the school. All staff work highly effectively together as a team to promote a supportive, nurturing and inclusive ethos. This consistent approach has a positive impact on children's readiness for learning. All staff know the children and families very well. They demonstrate a clear commitment to children's wellbeing and place a high priority on working with parents and partners to improve outcomes for children. Staff proactively encourage children and their families to participate in the wider life of the school and community. Children enjoy the opportunities they have to take responsibility and contribute to the life of the school. They are very proud of their school and know their views are valued and respected. Children demonstrate very positive behaviour with each other, as a result.
- Staff and children audited the learning environment and discussed ways to improve the learning spaces to meet the needs of all children. Staff have developed learning environments which are very calm and purposeful. They use displays highly effectively within the classrooms to support learning and celebrate children's achievements. In almost all lessons, children are engaged and motivated. All teachers use praise effectively to support children's confidence and self-esteem. Children demonstrate a resilient, 'have a go' attitude, as a result. In all classes, children work well independently, in pairs and in groups. All teachers ensure that appropriate resources are available for children to support them with their learning and wellbeing. This includes concrete materials and helpful strategies that they display within classrooms. Most children can discuss how this supports them to find solutions and become

more independent in their learning. Almost all children are increasingly aware of their rights and relate this to their class charters. All these effective features result in children behaving very well.

- All children contribute very well to the life of the school through a wide range of pupil leadership roles including as members of the pupil council, eco and health committees. The 'pupil choice and voice' approach supports children to have a key role in supporting school improvement. Children are passionate in consulting their peers about what is important to them in school and report confidently on the improvements they have made.
- Staff explanations and instructions are very clear and help children know what they need to do in their learning. Almost all teachers use questioning well to check for understanding and most use a range of skilled questioning to develop children's higher order thinking skills. All teachers share with children the purpose of learning and how they can be successful. Where success criteria are co-created with children, this helps them to take increased ownership of their learning. Teachers set individual targets for children in literacy, numeracy and wellbeing. This helps children understand what they need to do to progress in their learning. In all classes, teachers provide children with helpful verbal and written feedback linked to the success criteria. This supports children to better understand their progress and next steps in learning. Most children across the school engage regularly in peer and self-assessment. Teachers should continue to provide children with opportunities to act on the feedback provided. This will help them to develop personalised targets in the areas they need to improve and increase further ownership of their learning and progress.
- Most teachers plan tasks and activities well for whole classes, groups and individuals, building well on children's prior learning. Most lessons are well paced and provide appropriate levels of challenge. Teachers should now ensure that learning experiences planned meet the needs of all children. This will maximise progress and achievement and ensure the pace and challenge of all lessons is appropriate.
- In all classes, children use digital technology very well to support and enhance their learning. They take photographs, make videos and play games to reinforce their learning. Children use digital technologies across learning, to undertake research and to develop presentation skills. Staff make very effective use of digital technology to help children who require additional support for their learning. As planned, staff should continue to develop creative approaches to using digital technology to enhance teaching and learning further.
- Staff at the early stages have worked collaboratively to embed high-quality play-based learning. Children experience a range of stimulating learning environments that encourage independent learning, creativity and opportunities for personalisation and choice. This is having a positive impact on children's achievement and attainment. There is an effective balance of free play and adult-led activities. As staff continue to develop play across the school, they should work together to ensure they build on existing practice. This will ensure play is integral to learning.
- Teachers plan a wide range of regular, progressive outdoor learning experiences to build on children's knowledge and skills. They make effective use of rich learning contexts that the school grounds and local environment provides. Children enjoy well-planned opportunities to apply their knowledge and skills in real-life contexts which have a clear purpose. For example, children used mathematics and map reading skills to learn about their local area. Children across P1 to P7 learn skills in the wildlife garden and school polycrub through a progressive outdoor learning programme. They have regular opportunities to apply their skills. For example, older children benefit from measuring perimeter and calculating area in nature.

- The headteacher has recently introduced a helpful annual assessment framework, outlining clearly when key assessments will take place across the school year. All teachers use a range of formative, summative and standardised assessments for literacy and numeracy. This includes Scottish National Standardised Assessments. Teachers increasingly use high-quality assessments to support children to demonstrate application of skills across the curriculum. Teachers continue to enhance their approaches to assessment across other curricular areas. This strengthens further teachers' confidence in the effective use of assessment information to plan future learning.
- Across the school, there is a strong ethos of staff collegiality and positive working relationships. Staff work together very well to share standards in reading, writing, numeracy and mathematics. This supports teachers' confidence and accuracy when making professional judgements on children's progress and achievement of a level in literacy and numeracy. As planned, staff should continue to develop moderation of learning across the curriculum, within and beyond the school. This would continue to support a shared understanding of national standards.
- Teachers use school, cluster and local authority progressive pathways well to plan children's learning over a range of timescales. They work collaboratively to plan for progression through and across the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels. Teachers plan meaningful links across curriculum areas that enable children to practise and transfer their skills across different contexts. All children have opportunities to shape what and how they learn based on their interests through the use of 'big questions', such as the 'on my doorstep' topic. This supports their engagement and enjoyment in learning related to the topics.
- The headteacher and staff work collaboratively to track children's progress and achievement in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. The headteacher meets formally with staff three times a year to discuss children's progress and attainment. They take account of a range of barriers to learning that impact on children. Staff introduce effective interventions to support children who are identified as having gaps in their learning. Tracking information, staff consultation meetings and pupil voice provide valuable information to staff to identify where support may be required. Learning support workers and the play support worker are deployed very well. They provide a balance of highly effective support to individuals and cohorts of children, and wider support for learning for others. These high-quality interventions are monitored very effectively to ensure improved outcomes and a positive impact on attainment. As planned, the headteacher should continue to develop systems to include tracking children's progress in other areas 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.

## 3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

very 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 in literacy and numeracy

- Overall, attainment across the school in literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics is very good. Most children achieve appropriate CfE levels in literacy and numeracy and, across the school, a few children are exceeding nationally expected levels. Almost all children who face barriers to learning are making very good progress towards meeting their individual targets.

### Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, most children are making very good progress in listening and talking and reading. Most children make good progress in writing. Staff identified gaps in children's learning in reading and have put in place interventions and approaches that have addressed these. Children across the school demonstrate greater confidence in their vocabulary and reading skills, as a result.

### Listening and talking

- At early level, almost all children communicate with increased confidence. They respond and understand the skills required to listen well and take turns when talking in a group. At first level, almost all children are confident with the skills of good listening and talking. Most children communicate clearly to share their opinions. At second level, most children ask and answer questions well. Almost all children work effectively in pairs and group work, for example, contributing appropriately to discussions on class novels.

### Reading

- Children at all stages demonstrate enthusiasm for reading and articulate their choice in texts from the class and school libraries. At early level, most children are developing very well their knowledge of sounds and blend these to read with increasing confidence. At first level most children read with fluency. At first level, as a result of a targeted intervention to support children's understanding of texts, children demonstrate greater confidence in answering a variety of questions about a text. At second level, most children use a range of reading strategies very well to demonstrate understanding and analysis of texts. Most children read a range of genres and answer literal, inferential and evaluative questions confidently.

### Writing

- At early level, almost all children write simple sentences using capital letters and full stops. A few use simple connectives. At first level, most children write at length using capital letters, full stops, adjectives and more complex connectives. At first and second level, most children write regularly in a wide variety of genres for a range of purposes. At second level, children understand the features of writing and use a variety of language techniques to engage the reader, for example, in writing poetry. Children across the school would benefit from repeated

experiences in writing specific genre. This would provide opportunities for them to act on feedback and apply it in similar learning contexts.

### **Numeracy and mathematics**

- Overall, children's progress in numeracy and mathematics is very good. Across the school, children benefit from increased opportunities to apply their learning across other areas of the curriculum and in real-life contexts.

### **Number, money and measure**

- Across the school, children apply their learning and skills in number, money and measure to real-life, practical contexts. At early level, almost all children are confident using addition and subtraction and accurately share out a group of items equally into smaller groups. At first level, most children identify accurately the place value of three and four-digit numbers and confidently round to the nearest 100. They know and use an increasing range of strategies to complete calculations in addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. A few children need further practice in applying their skills in multi-step calculations. At second level, most children have good mental agility, completing calculations accurately and justifying their choice of strategy. They are confident in calculating the perimeter and area of simple shapes. They now need further practice with fractions, decimals and percentages.

### **Shape, position and movement**

- At early level, almost all children can describe the properties of and identify lines of symmetry within two-dimensional shapes. They can use positional language to provide simple instructions for movement and direction. At first and second level, most children provide directions using compass points accurately and apply this knowledge in real-life situations. At second level, most children use mathematical language well to describe and classify different angles. They should develop further their knowledge of complementary and supplementary angles and use this to calculate missing angles.

### **Information handling**

- Across the school, children gather and display information in a range of ways across the curriculum. At early level, all children use tally marks to record information correctly. At first level, most children interpret data confidently when using bar graphs and Venn diagrams. At second level, most children can accurately gather, organise and display data using graphs and charts both digitally and in written form. They understand the concept of probability to predict the likelihood of given events.

### **Attainment over time**

- Attainment data indicates that staff have consistently raised attainment for almost all children from prior levels of attainment. The headteacher has a clear strategy to raise attainment over time through thorough planning and monitoring of children's learning. Working together, the headteacher and staff identify and understand the reasons for gaps in learning. They take action when particular cohorts have lower attainment using a range of well-considered strategies and interventions. The headteacher and all staff have a clear vision and ambition for every learner to learn in an inclusive environment on an equitable basis. The headteacher's collaborative approach to analysing data allows all staff to have an insight into the barriers children face in their learning. Central to the school's approach and daily work is a focus on high-quality learning and teaching and inclusion. Interventions particularly in reading and numeracy are leading to an upward trend in attainment for targeted groups.

### **Overall quality of learners' achievements**

- Staff value the achievements of children both in and outside of school. Across all stages, achievements are shared and celebrated in assemblies and in wall displays highlighting the

diversity of achievements throughout the school. Children enjoy the opportunity to reflect on the skills they have gained through activities.

- Children are gaining skills in leadership, organisation and communication through activities including eco committee, health and wellbeing committee and pupil council. Each class plan events, competitions and share ideas on improvement. As a result, children are developing important skills for learning, life and work. Most children confidently articulate the skills they are developing and how they use these in real-life contexts.
- The location of the school and well-developed outdoor space allows children to develop and apply skills learned in the classroom through outdoor learning and outdoor play. The headteacher tracks the community clubs and activities children attend. Teachers use this knowledge to identify those at risk of missing out. Partnerships with Active Schools allows all children in P5 opportunities as Young Leaders and in P6 children take part in Bikeability to enhance their road safety skills when cycling.

### **Equity for all learners**

- Staff know the children and families very well and understand the socio-economic factors impacting on families. The headteacher ensures that strategies are in place to reduce or negate the cost of trips, resources and activities for children. Staff ensure that equity is at the centre of the school's ethos and strong partnership. The school's educational psychologist works with the school using a framework of inclusion. As a result, children understand the meaning of equity and inclusion very well. Children in the upper stages use their voice well to lead change. They have changed their classroom environment to make it a more inclusive place of learning, supporting all children to engage in their learning.
- The headteacher uses Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) effectively to provide additional staffing. This supports staff to implement targeted interventions in reading and numeracy and to create specific targeted interventions for children facing barriers to learning. Through collaborative discussions and robust self-evaluation staff reflect and review the impact of these interventions to identify successes. This has led to increased attainment and progress towards achieving the targets. Attainment is increasing for those affected by poverty and there is evidence of progress in narrowing the poverty related attainment gap.
- The school's attendance is very good. The headteacher works proactively with parents to ensure a high rate of attendance at school.



## Other relevant evidence

- Moving forward, the headteacher should ensure that staff, parents and children are actively involved in determining the focus of the PEF spend for their school.
- All children receive two hours of high-quality physical education (PE) each week. One hour of this is delivered by a PE specialist.
- All children engage in high-quality learning activities in art and music celebrating Scottish culture as well as exploring children's place as global citizens. Children's participation in school performances develops their musical skills, confidence and sense of self-worth. In art, they experiment with different techniques and media to create their own masterpieces. Children celebrate their artwork as part of a school art exhibition.

## Practice worth sharing more widely

- The supportive, nurturing and inclusive ethos, promotes and celebrates equity, inclusion and achievements. This is underpinned by highly effective work between staff and with partners. There is a very strong promotion of the importance of recognising and respecting differences in people.
- The headteacher's approach to developing the understanding of equity by children, staff, children, parents and partners is highly effective. The school's educational psychologist works with the school using a framework of inclusion. There is a very strong promotion of respect for neurodiversity, as a result. The headteacher introduced a whole-school approach to professional learning and development for staff. This gave staff a deeper understanding of neurodiversity and how to improve children's social and emotional wellbeing. As a result, they have introduced a range of successful universal and targeted interventions.
- The whole staff team's very effective approaches to helping children with an additional support need. This work is under-pinned by a commitment to high-quality professional learning. Staff provide very good universal support in class to all children and targeted support in small group settings. Children who receive targeted support are monitored and tracked very closely. Tracking information, weekly staff consultation meetings and pupil voice provide valuable information to staff to identify where support may be required. This rigour ensures children are receiving the correct support at the appropriate level. Staff have created a helpful 'Visitor's Guide to Whiteness'. This details the consistent whole school approach to nurture.

## 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.