Summarised inspection findings

Cockburnspath Primary School

Scottish Borders Council

23 April 2024

Key contextual information

Cockburnspath Primary School is a small rural school in the Scottish Borders which is part of the Eyemouth learning community. There are currently 41 children in the school across two mixed stage classes. The headteacher has been in post since 2021. She is also headteacher for Coldingham Primary School. The school has a principal teacher, who has responsibility across both schools and a teaching commitment of 0.2 FTE.

During the last academic year there have been staffing challenges. As a result, some children have experienced inconsistency in teaching staff. The principal teacher was fully class committed during the week of the inspection due to staff absence. Most children reside in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation decile 5.

1.3 Leadership of change	weak
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 school has undergone a period of instability and change due to a range of factors, including changes in staffing. This has negatively influenced the school's capacity for continuous improvement. Senior leaders should now work collaboratively with staff to create a stronger culture of self-evaluation. This will support development of a strategic plan to secure better outcomes for all children.

■ Last session, senior leaders worked with children, staff and parents to review the school's vision, values and aims. The school values of 'kind, respectful and safe' are displayed in classrooms and corridors. All staff model the values well and support children to explore the values in class and during school assemblies. Children are awarded certificates for demonstrating the values in action. Most children are developing well their understanding of the relevance of these values to their learning. Senior leaders should now, as planned, share the school values further with the wider school community and partners. This will support the whole school community to have a shared ownership of the school's vision, values and aims.

■ Staff take effective action to develop positive relationships with children and their families. They understand the socioeconomic contexts in which children and families live. Senior leaders have focused on developing a positive and purposeful climate for learning, where inclusion is a central feature of practice. Going forward, it will be important to build on and sustain the progress made in developing nurturing approaches throughout the school.

■ Senior leaders have identified the need to develop consistently high-quality learning experiences that meet the needs of all children. Due to a range of factors, planned improvements to learning and teaching have had a limited impact on children's progress. The school is soon to have more stability in teaching staffing. This should be an impetus for targeting areas which need to be improved, such as ensuring learning is appropriately matched to children's levels of ability. Senior leaders should improve quality assurance processes to

include a more regular sampling and evaluation of children's work to monitor the quality of children's experiences.

- Senior leaders meet with staff termly to discuss children's progress. This has helped senior leaders to identify children who have significant barriers to their learning. These processes have been less effective at identifying gaps in children's literacy and numeracy. The headteacher should now work with staff to ensure that decisions on children's progress are based on a wider range of data and more reliable assessment evidence. This will help staff to accurately identify ways to target gaps in children's learning and improve children's progress in literacy and numeracy.

- Teaching and support staff have engaged in effective professional learning which has supported improvements in inclusion and nurture principles. This has helped to strengthen positive relationships across the school and supported more children to be ready to learn. Senior leaders should now ensure staff engage in professional learning to develop and improve approaches to raise attainment.

- Staff are reflective about their practice and are keen to continue to develop their skills and knowledge. Staff should be provided with more opportunities to lead on specific areas linked to school improvement priorities, interests and identified professional learning. This will help to improve leadership at all levels.

- A few older children have leadership roles, such as Clan Chieftains and junior librarians. These roles provide children with some opportunities to contribute to the life and the work of the school. For example, Clan Chieftains recently created a pupil voice post-box to encourage children to share their ideas and opinions. Children are keen to develop their leadership responsibilities and make a more impactful contribution to the work of improving their school. Staff should give younger children more opportunities to contribute to leadership groups.

- The majority of children feel staff listen to their views, but they are not clear on how this leads to improvement or change in the school. Senior leaders and staff should work closely with children to ensure they are aware of the ways in which their ideas and opinions contribute to the life and the work of the school.

- The school receives a small amount of Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) which has been used to fund additional staffing to support a number of children. Going forward, approaches supported by PEF should be clearly planned with specific measures of success. Senior leaders should now evaluate the impact of PEF to raise attainment of children who may be disadvantaged by their socioeconomic status. It will be important for senior leaders to include parents in decisions about the use of PEF.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment	satisfactory

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

■ All staff are very caring in their roles and understand well children's individual backgrounds and circumstances. This supports the development of positive relationships and is helping to ensure the ethos and culture of the school is respectful and nurturing.

■ Children are friendly and most respond well to recently implemented positive behaviour strategies. A few children can find it difficult at times to remain focused during learning. As result, their learning and that of others is at times disrupted. Teachers and support staff provide well-timed and bespoke support for a few children who require help to regulate their emotions. Staff should continue to provide bespoke support for identified children and reinforce consistently, expected standards. This will help continue to improve children's focus and engagement with their learning.

■ Senior leaders seek children's views through pupil voice conversations. Children have recently identified ways in which they would like to make meaningful change to school life. Staff should now consider how to act on children's suggestions for change and improvement.

■ In almost all lessons, teachers share effectively the purpose of learning with children through learning intentions. They should now involve children more fully in identifying what will constitute success. This will help children to understand their own progress. In almost all lessons, teachers provide children with clear instructions and explanations. Teachers use questioning effectively to check children's understanding of their learning. Teachers should now develop questioning to extend children's learning and to challenge children's thinking.

■ Teachers plan differentiated activities for children in literacy and numeracy in the context of multi-composite classes. Across all stages, a few children require more challenge in their learning. Teachers should review approaches to planning to ensure that tasks and activities are set at the correct level of difficulty. In doing so, they should provide increased opportunities for children to lead and develop their own learning in a purposeful and meaningful way. This will help to ensure that the pace of learning is appropriate for all children.

■ Teachers provide verbal, and to a more limited extent, written feedback to children about their work. Teachers should now work collaboratively to develop more consistent approaches to providing children with high-quality feedback. This will help ensure that children understand the progress they are making and their next steps in learning. Children's improved attainment would be supported by setting individualised targets in literacy and numeracy.

- Children in all classes use digital technology to reinforce and extend learning. For example, older children recently programmed tablets to operate micro-bits as pedometers. Staff should now ensure digital technology is used more consistently for a broader range of purposes and contexts for learning, including to support children's literacy.

- Staff working at the early level are developing their knowledge of play-based pedagogy. They have engaged in professional learning to strengthen their understanding of play, working in partnership with nursery practitioners. Younger children benefit from access to the nursery for play opportunities on a weekly basis. Staff should continue to engage in ongoing robust self-evaluation to ensure these experiences offer sufficient challenge and progression for children. Staff should continue to engage with national guidance to ensure the quality of spaces, experiences and interactions promote effective play pedagogy.

- Children have some opportunities to learn outdoors in the context of physical education (PE) and interdisciplinary learning. Children would like more opportunities to learn outdoors. Staff could make more effective use of outdoor spaces as motivating contexts for teaching and learning. For example, there is considerable scope to further use the local forest area and beach to enhance learning opportunities.

- The headteacher developed an annual assessment calendar. All planned assessments were not completed in the last academic session due to a range of factors. As a result, teachers are at the early stages of gathering assessment information to monitor children's progress in literacy and numeracy. Senior leaders should now ensure teachers use a range of assessments, including summative assessments. This will identify gaps in children's learning and better inform planning for learning.

- Staff have recently engaged in moderation of children's writing with a local school. Teachers should now continue to engage in moderation activities and develop further their use of national Benchmarks. This will support their understanding of national standards and help to ensure professional judgements about children's progress and achievements are accurate and robust.

- Teachers highlight Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) experiences and outcomes on progression planners to plan teaching and learning on an annual and termly basis. This is not yet ensuring that children's learning is progressive and builds on prior learning across all areas of the curriculum. Teachers should review approaches to planning. Evaluations of planning should be used to help identify next steps in learning for individual and groups of children.

- The headteacher has recently introduced a new online system for monitoring and tracking children's progress. The headteacher meets with teachers termly to discuss the progress of children. This is helping teachers to identify specific interventions needed for children who have barriers to their learning. Senior leaders should build on these approaches to monitoring, using a wider range of evidence to monitor children's progress in learning. This will help provide more accurate information about how well children are progressing and support strategies to raise attainment.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

■ Senior leaders recently reviewed Cockburnspath Primary curriculum rationale. Children have been proud to share information about the curriculum rationale through a digital link to a short film which outlines the vision of the school.

■ Staff use previously created bundles of CfE experiences and outcomes to help provide an overview of the curriculum. Teachers use progression pathways for literacy and numeracy. These are not yet helping all children to build on prior knowledge. Senior leaders should now ensure that planning is used effectively across all stages to improve progress for all children.

■ Staff should provide children with more opportunities to develop outdoor learning skills in a progressive way making more effective use of the unique context of the school.

■ Children receive high-quality PE lessons delivered by a specialist PE teacher. The specialist PE teacher shares planning with teachers to ensure progression for the second planned hour of PE. Staff should ensure that all children receive their minimum national recommendation of two hours of high-quality PE.

■ All children learn German as a modern language. Staff should ensure children benefit from regular learning and receive their entitlement of 1+2 languages.

■ Children have opportunities to use digital learning to support and extend aspects of their learning. Staff should continue to ensure children have opportunities to use digital technology across the curriculum.

■ Children moving from ELC into P1 and from P7 onwards to secondary education benefit from well-planned local authority transition programmes. This is helping to support continuity in children's learning and progression.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

■ Pre-inspection questionnaires and parental feedback indicate that a few parents would like more regular communication about the work of the school. Parents in the school do not yet have consistent access to the online learning platform which was recently developed to share information about children's learning. A few parents would appreciate more regular feedback about their child's progress in learning.

■ Senior leaders recently introduced termly 'Bide and Blether' sessions for parents to come into school. Parents would like more opportunities to learn with their child. Senior leaders should now provide increased opportunities for parents to share in their child's learning. This will help parents to better support children's progress with their learning.

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. Areas for development have been agreed with the school and the education authority that need to be addressed as a matter for urgency.

3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion	satisfactory

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

■ Staff work effectively together to create an environment that encourages respect and promotes positive relationships. All staff reinforce expectations in a calm and consistent manner. All staff encourage and support children to demonstrate positive behaviour through their use of nurturing principles, school values and through setting clear expectations.

■ Staff use a range of effective approaches to gather information about children's wellbeing. Approaches include using wellbeing assessments and daily 'check-ins' with individual children. Staff have worked together to improve the school environment to support the needs of all children. Staff use information from children's 'learning passports' to support strategies and routines for children who require support with their learning. Recently introduced approaches to develop self-regulation are supporting children to be more aware of their feelings and emotions.

■ All staff have engaged in effective professional learning on nurture, trauma and attachment. This is supporting staff to provide calm and consistent approaches to enable children to re-engage positively with their learning when children find situations challenging.

■ Teachers, support assistants and visiting professionals provide effective and intensive support to help a few children understand better how to regulate their behaviour. This work is supported by very effective partnership working. This includes support from the local authority inclusion service and a home-link worker. These partnerships are having a positive impact in supporting a few children to manage their emotions more positively and engage better in their learning. Staff benefit from partners' knowledge and expertise which is being used effectively to build staff capacity in supporting children's wellbeing needs.

■ Staff focus appropriately on helping children understand their own health and wellbeing and what they need to do to be healthy and safe. Through the health and wellbeing curriculum, children are developing an understanding of their own emotions and the importance of staying safe, for example while online.

■ Children are developing their understanding of the wellbeing indicators. A minority of children can explain what the wellbeing indicators are and what they mean for them. Staff should continue to embed the language of wellbeing indicators in daily school life. This will help children to discuss and reflect on their own wellbeing.

■ Children have had some opportunities to learn outdoors in the previous session and would like more opportunities to do so. Senior leaders should now develop further the use of the school's unique context and outdoor spaces to support children better to develop their wellbeing.

- Senior leaders maintain a helpful overview of children's support needs across the school. This supports senior leaders to identify interventions for those children with additional barriers to learning. Senior leaders should ensure children, parents, partners and staff are involved in the development, implementation and review of individual children's plans and targets. Staff should continue to review the impact of interventions to support children to make improved progress in their learning.

- A majority of children feel that they can speak to adults in school about their worries or concerns. Pupil leadership groups have suggested ways for children to share any concerns or worries with staff. These include children posting comments in a designated post-box and being able to scan a matrix code to email designated staff directly. Children are not yet making use of these additional ways to speak to an adult about their wellbeing. Staff should continue to find ways to support children share any worries and concerns about their wellbeing.

- A few parents and children have ongoing concerns about how the school deals with bullying. Senior leaders should provide more clarity for parents and children about the processes to address ongoing concerns.

- Children have recently started learning about children's rights. Most children can talk about their rights, such as their right to an education. As planned, staff should provide opportunities for children at all stages to further explore their rights and how these impact upon their lives in school and beyond.

- Children learn about different religions through lessons in religious and moral education (RME). For example, children explore their understanding of faiths through celebrations and events. This work is supported by visits from the local minister and visits by children to the local church. Staff now need to provide children with progressive opportunities to develop their understanding of issues relating to equality and diversity.

- The school submitted information relating to compliance with the revised Nutritional Regulations 2020 and key duties as required by The Schools (Health Promotion and Nutrition) (Scotland) Act 2007. The Health and Nutrition Inspector (HNI) discussed this information with relevant staff and children. In addition, the HNI examined documentation relating to the effectiveness of whole school approaches to improving the health and wellbeing of children through food in school. Several areas for improvement have been agreed with the school and the school meals provider.

- At the time of inspection, attendance was below national and local authority averages. Senior leaders should review approaches to supporting improved attendance and work with families to improve the attendance of identified children.

3.2 Raising attainment and achievement	weak

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
- Attainment and progress will be expressed as 'overall' statements, rather than for specific year groups. This is because of the small numbers of children at each stage.

- Overall, attainment in literacy and numeracy is below national expectations. A few children are making appropriate progress in their literacy and numeracy. A majority of children are capable of making much better progress. The majority of children with additional barriers to learning are making satisfactory progress relative to individual targets.

Attainment in literacy and English
- Overall the majority of children are making satisfactory progress in reading and insufficient progress in listening and talking and writing.

Listening and talking
- Overall, across the school, children require support to develop listening and talking skills in a range of contexts. At early level, the majority of children follow simple instructions from staff. The majority need support to develop their skills in turn-taking, listening and responding to others appropriately. At first and second levels, the majority of children speak confidently in a group setting. They are able to explain reasons for their responses. They now need more practise listening and responding to others in group and class discussions. This will help them to remain better focused on the purpose of learning.

Reading
- At early level, the majority of children are developing their knowledge of sounds and letters. They blend sounds to make simple words. Children now need more opportunities to read a range of simple books and texts. At first level, the majority of children speak enthusiastically about reading for enjoyment. They now need more opportunities to develop their oral reading skills, taking account of punctuation when reading aloud. At second level, the majority of children talk confidently about their favourite authors and can justify their choices when choosing books to read for pleasure. They now need to develop skills in responding to a range of literal, inferential and evaluative questions to demonstrate their understanding of texts.

Writing
- At early level, most children are learning to write letters and words. The majority of children can form letters legibly. Children now need more practise writing simple sentences independently, attempting capital letters and full stops. At first and second level, children need opportunities to write more frequently, in a range of contexts. Children should be supported to use punctuation more accurately to ensure their writing makes sense to the reader. It will be important to build on children's enthusiasm for reading and support them to transfer their knowledge of language

to writing. At all stages, teachers should support children to improve the standard of handwriting and presentation of written work.

Numeracy and mathematics
- Overall, the majority of children are making insufficient progress with numeracy and mathematics. Children at first and second level should have more regular opportunities to revisit taught mathematical concepts. This will help to consolidate their learning. Across the school, children would benefit from increased opportunities to apply their learning in numeracy and mathematics in real-life contexts.

Number, money and measure
- At early level, the majority of children order numbers correctly within the range zero to 20. They add and subtract to 10 with accuracy. At first level, the majority of children round numbers to the nearest 100. Children need to develop their understanding of time and measurement. At second level, the majority of children round whole numbers to the nearest 1000 and 10,000. They need to develop their understanding of area, perimeter, fractions and percentages. They would benefit from more work with word problems.

Shape, position and movement
- The majority of children recognise and describe some of the properties of common two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects appropriate to their CfE level. Children at first and second level should revisit learning on angles and symmetry.

Information handling
- Overall, children at all stages would benefit from developing data handling skills further including through real-life contexts and digital technology.

Attainment over time
- The small roll and cohort size has influenced trends in attainment data over time. Children's progress and attainment has been impacted by frequent changes of staffing in recent years. Senior leaders and staff should now develop clear strategies to raise attainment for all children, ensuring gaps in children's literacy and numeracy are identified and targeted to accelerate progress. Senior leaders are not yet tracking progress of children across all curriculum areas.

Overall quality of learners' achievements
- A few older children have opportunities to develop leadership skills through, for example, roles as Clan Chieftains and junior librarians. Children are not yet able to talk confidently about the skills they are developing through these roles. Children are well placed to play a more active role in contributing to the life and the work of the school. This would provide them with important opportunities to develop skills for learning, life and work.

- Children's achievements in and out with school are celebrated at assembly, on 'achievement and aspiration' wall displays and through certificates linked to the school values. Older children participate in local rugby and hockey festivals. Senior leaders track children's achievements and participation in leadership roles. Senior leaders use this information to provide more opportunities for children to experience success in a range of contexts, such as access to swimming lessons. Staff should now support children to identify and profile skills for learning, life and work which they are developing through opportunities for achievement.

Equity for all learners
- Senior leaders have a clear understanding of the socioeconomic context of the rural community and are aware of the challenges facing families. These include the cost of living and access to transport that can limit children's learning experiences. Senior leaders take

action to support equity of experience for children. For example, the school runs a free breakfast club and supports recycling of clothing with a 'new to you' clothing rail available for families.

◼ Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) is focused on provision of additional support staff. Senior leaders should develop approaches to monitoring and evaluating the impact of interventions funded by PEF. This will allow them to demonstrate how they are accelerating progress in literacy and numeracy for identified 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.