

# Summarised inspection findings

**Applecross Primary School and Nursery Class**

The Highland Council

9 June 2020

## Key contextual information

Applecross Primary School is located in the remote village of Applecross on the western coast of The Highland Council. It is a small school with one multi-stage composite class of 11 children. The accommodation also has a small playroom for nursery provision and large enclosed outdoor play spaces. Gaelic language learning is taught from P1 through to P7 stages. The headteacher is also the headteacher of Lochcarron Primary School.

### 1.3 Leadership of change

**satisfactory**

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 has been in post for over two years. He encourages outdoor learning and values this as a prominent feature of the school. He consults with staff, partners and children to develop the use of the school's unique environment and links with its community. The headteacher and staff have successfully raised the profile of the school within its community and brought stakeholders together to support a variety of events in which children participate.
- The headteacher is committed to collaborative working and promotes the school's values of thoughtfulness, honesty and friendship. Relationships within the school are positive and respectful. The headteacher enables teachers and staff to lead school developments such as learning outdoors. He supports staff in taking forward professional learning leading to improved opportunities to learn outdoors. The school's well implemented approach to outdoor learning is a very good example of positive impact on outcomes for children. Staff share their interests and skills to benefit children and provide a relevant curriculum. This includes fostering positive attitudes to Gaelic language learning. The local community has much to offer the school through resources, professional expertise and skills. Many contribute to the work of the school including the development of the school field for the youngest children. The school has an appropriate plan for improvement. The headteacher, staff and partners should evaluate the progress the school is making in taking forward its improvement priorities to ensure the pace of change is leading to the identified outcomes within timescales. The school should ensure its approaches to self-evaluation and priorities for improvement are leading to improved outcomes in literacy and numeracy as well as health and wellbeing. The headteacher should now consult widely with parents, partners, staff and children to refresh the school's vision and values. He should involve them in refreshing the rationale for the curriculum to ensure it accurately reflects the school's vision and its unique context. This should ensure all parents fully understand what the headteachers strategic vision is for the school and how they can play a full part as partners. Parents are welcome in the school and find the headteacher and staff approachable. The headteacher should ensure that any concerns raised, are acted upon promptly and communicated effectively. He should develop clear channels of communication with parents and be available to them at regular designated times.
- Staff are actively involved in making the school a vibrant environment through their shared leadership. They work effectively as a team to bring about improvement. They have improved

the school library which children access regularly and are encouraged to read for pleasure. They lead enterprise opportunities with parents and involve them in residential outdoor excursions. Children are learning valued skills for life and work. Overall, parents are happy with the experiences children have and value the commitment of staff. The staff team share expertise and support one another well. They value opportunities to develop skills and professional knowledge. They should continue to look outwards to share and learn from effective practice in other school's. The headteacher should enable teachers to develop cooperative learning approaches and a whole school approach to nurture. Formal time should be identified for regular collaborative planning for learning amongst staff to ensure continuity, cohesion and consistency across the team.

## 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

- Overall, all children are happy in school and enjoy positive relationships with one another. They are independent as learners and take a growing range of responsibilities around the school. They play energetically, are resilient and are respectful of one another. Staff are caring and work effectively together to provide positive learning experiences for children.
- The school is developing profiles for each child that record significant aspects of learning. These provide helpful records to show children's progress and should be reviewed to ensure children continue to develop a clear understanding of themselves as learners. They are developing skills in giving their opinions through peer and self-assessment opportunities. They are becoming increasingly aware of what they are learning and knowing when they have achieved success. Regular learning conversations are helping children to become more reflective about their learning. They need increased opportunities to assess their progress against clearly identified targets. All children work productively alongside one another and are motivated to learn. They concentrate well on tasks and complete them in the time given. There are a few missed opportunities in the classroom, where collaborative learning in mixed groups would enrich learning and deepen children's level of engagement further.
- Teachers plan a broad curriculum and interesting learning activities for small groups and individuals. A few activities are not matched closely enough to the needs of a few children who are capable of increased challenge or who require support and intervention. The headteacher and staff should develop formalised opportunities for staff to plan together. Clearly defined roles and responsibilities for all staff would increase the effectiveness of support for learning. All staff need to be clear about children's targets and contribute to assessing the progress they make.
- Overall, the quality of teaching is of a high standard. The use of questioning is skilful and ensures all children are motivated and listen attentively to what they are asked to do. The learning styles and preferences of individuals are considered carefully and questioning ensures all children are included effectively in class activities. Teaching is directed to small groups and individuals as appropriate to their progress and levels in Curriculum for Excellence. Teachers organise activities well to ensure teaching time is uninterrupted and children focus independently on their tasks. They interact very positively with children and encourage them to do their best. They use praise for effort well to motivate children and promote mutual respect. Teachers provide appropriate daily interventions to encourage and improve children's oral Gaelic skills. All children respond positively to active learning and enjoy opportunities to work together as a whole class. Teachers should collaborate together to share effective practice and work towards consistency in approaches. They should develop co-operative learning further and widen the use of digital technologies as outlined in the school improvement plan.

- All children are progressing in their learning and are beginning to understand themselves as learners. They talk clearly about what they are learning but do not always articulate the skills they are developing. They know the progress they are making in numeracy and literacy and talk about the Curriculum for Excellence level they are working within. Learning conversations are helpful opportunities for children to reflect on their learning. The staff should consider ways in which targets in learning can be more clearly defined to help children understand the application of their skills in the many interesting activities they are involved in.
- Teachers discuss assessment information and the progress children are making at regular intervals. They identify where support and challenge may be required. Further development of moderation and shared understanding of standards will support robust judgements and professional dialogue. The headteacher and staff should consider how opportunities for professional dialogue can be increased to evaluate children's progress and plan next steps. They should develop the use of benchmarks further for all curricular areas and cross reference these with the key assessments used to judge children's progress. This will support the use of assessment information by staff when planning next steps in learning.

## 2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- The school's curriculum is enhanced through outdoor learning and is relevant to the unique context of its location. Teachers use the local environment effectively to support and challenge children's learning. They have a strong focus on the design principles and use defined curriculum pathways to plan a broad experience for all children. Learning pathways are based on the experiences and outcomes and provide support to teachers planning for children's progression in learning. Teachers contextualise learning very effectively to ensure children are developing a knowledge and understanding of their local environment and the wider world. They promote the linguistic characteristics of Gaelic through relevant historical and cultural contexts. Further development of high quality assessment will help support children to apply the skills they are developing and deepen their learning. Children enjoy the wide range of opportunities they have to learn outdoors. The school should take forward its plans to develop digital literacy across the curriculum.
- The headteacher and staff should now refresh the school's curriculum rationale so that it more accurately reflects the school's strategic vision and what it wants to achieve for children.
- The school provides relevant and appropriate experiences across the four contexts. Partners and parents are regularly involved in supporting the school's work. They contribute well to the school's focus on learning skills for life and work. Children have regular input to their learning through personalisation and choice. They have a strong voice in having their say. They led an enterprise initiative involving local business and parents which resulted in a successful camping excursion to Eigg.

## 2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- The school and its community are very supportive of the wide range of opportunities available to children. All parents and carers are actively involved in supporting the school and their children's learning. They are proactive in making the school a vibrant environment in which their children learn. They are positive about the school and appreciative of the efforts staff make for their children. The Parent Council includes all parents and meets regularly to discuss their role and support of the school's improvements. Overall, parents are satisfied with the school, the experiences children have and the progress they are making. They would value more effective and prompt communications from the headteacher. The headteacher should ensure all parents are clear about his strategic vision for the school and what he wants to achieve for children. A refreshed curriculum rationale that is summarised and shared with parents will support a common understanding of what the school wants to achieve for its children.

## 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.

### 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 school has an inclusive ethos where children are valued as individuals and contribute effectively to the work of the school. Their views are listened to and acted upon resulting in children leading in a variety of roles. They are proud of their school and their achievements. They build skills of resilience and the four capacities through their active involvement learning outdoors. They have creative skills in enterprise and use these effectively to make links with local partner businesses such as the local hotel. Overall, children enjoy learning and value their teachers. Relationships in the school are very positive and founded on mutual respect. Children's behaviour is exemplary and they show empathy towards others. They support one another's learning well.
- All children demonstrate perseverance through challenging activities outdoors such as participating on the camping and cycling trip to Eigg. Friendships are strong and children play together responsibly outdoors. They talk about their strengths in each of the wellbeing indicators. The headteacher and staff should consider ways in which children can self-evaluate their progress regularly against each of the wellbeing indicators. The ethos of the class is very positive and children identify and demonstrate the characteristics of being a 'Good Classmate'. This focus and children's understanding of being supportive to one another, has a positive impact on raising children's self-esteem. Staff should consider how they can build on these positive features through developing further children's rights and responsibilities, together with a whole school understanding of nurturing principles.
- The older children in the class are making good progress towards personal goals in mountain climbing, tree growing, eating vegetables and presenting at the local Mod. They have a strong sense of community and understanding of sustainability in a remote location. They have a good knowledge of how to keep safe and the importance of a healthy lifestyle. They know how to grow, harvest and cook vegetables and fruit.
- The headteacher and staff have awareness of the school's statutory duties for ensuring the safety of children. They are trained in the necessary aspects of keeping children safe and know what to do if an issue arises. The school promotes equalities and implements its equalities policy well.
- All children feel included at school and know how to get help if they need it. They are valued as individuals and are developing positive self-esteem through recognition of their attributes. The school community has a positive outlook and 'can do' attitude towards what can be achieved collectively. Parents, carers and partners are valued and all children are treated respectfully and with dignity. The headteacher and staff should review the school's values with all stakeholders to ensure they accurately reflect high expectations, ambition and mutual respect.

- The school has an inclusive ethos and no exclusions. The headteacher monitors absences and attendance levels are high. Children who may experience barriers to their learning are supported well. Staff are highly committed to ensuring all children enjoy their experiences at school.

## 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 English and numeracy and mathematics is good. Most children are making good progress from their prior levels.

### Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, the standard of literacy and English attainment across the school is good. Most children are making expected progress. Children who require additional support are making appropriate progress. Individual learning targets should be more clearly defined and shared with staff as appropriate to ensure all children make the best possible progress.

### Listening and talking

- All children listen attentively and follow instructions well. Most maintain good levels of concentration when listening to one another as a class. They recite Burns poetry and use their Gaelic vocabulary with growing confidence to ask simple questions. At early level, talking and listening is developing well. Skills in responding to questions are developing and confidence to offer clearly audible spoken answers is growing. Careful listening is resulting in good understanding when following tasks. At first level, most children listen well and speak to adults with growing confidence. They share ideas and opinions with one another and take turns in discussions. At second level, most children are confident and at ease when talking to adults and have positive interactions with one another. They build on one another's ideas and support the younger children encouragingly in their learning. They can distinguish the difference between fact and opinion. Most children at second level, are developing confidence to ask questions in Gaelic and increasing accuracy in pronunciation.

### Reading

- Most children are making good progress in reading. At early level, phonics are used with growing confidence to read common words and to recognise patterns in words. Simple reading books are read aloud with growing accuracy. At first level, most children enjoy reading for pleasure and select books from the library bus with enthusiasm. They access the school library for non-fiction texts and know the difference between fiction and non-fiction books. They read aloud with confidence and expression, using punctuation accurately to inform intonation. By second level, most children read regularly for enjoyment and show a good understanding of what they have read. They make effective use of vocabulary to explain the ideas of the author to one another. They read poetry and songs in Gaelic with growing fluency and understanding. The school should build on this positive progress and continue to develop the use of the school library.

### Writing

- Most children write well for a wide variety of purposes. At early level, letter formation is developing well and copying of simple sentences is leading to independent writing. At first level, most children present their written ideas to a good standard and use punctuation

accurately. They write informative tourist brochures about Eigg and use illustrations to interest the reader. By second level, most children write well-crafted extended pieces of writing in a range of genre. They use their imaginative skills to write and then perform a play script about climate change. Overall, the quality of handwritten presentation in jotters could be improved.

### **Attainment in numeracy and maths**

- Overall attainment in numeracy and mathematics is good.

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

- At early level, daily routines in class and sequencing of events that take place during the day, are understood clearly. Sequencing of numbers to twenty and writing the numerals is developing. Addition facts within ten are understood well. At first level, most children add and subtract, making good use of mental strategies and written skills. They are less confident in using multiplication and division facts. Most children explain what a simple fraction is using a pictorial representation and are developing a growing understanding of mixed fractions and decimals. At second level, most children multiply and divide numbers to two decimal places by 10 and 100. They show agility in mental maths but are not so confident about strategies for problem solving. Their recall of multiplication tables is sound. They have a good understanding of the common units of measure and can calculate the perimeter of two-dimensional shapes.

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

- At early level the language of shape and recognising common two-dimensional shapes is developing well. At first level, most children have an understanding of more complex two-dimensional shapes and the properties of three-dimensional objects. At second level, most children accurately draw nets of three-dimensional objects and make them successfully with card. They understand the connections between two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects and name their features. There is the need to increase the use of digital technologies to develop children's skills in position and movement.

### **Information handling**

- At early level, support from other children helps with organising counting and tallying. At first and second level children organise information in tables and use it to complete numeracy tasks. They collate information from surveys using tally marks and create tables. They display information in bar graphs and interpret line graphs. They are not yet sufficiently skilled in drawing graphs using axes and scales accurately.

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

- All children are very proud of their school and are fully involved in decision making about things they would like to experience and achieve. They are learning Gaelic each day and gaining confidence in speaking in sentences using verbs and common vocabulary. They enjoy applying their skills in pronunciation through singing songs together. The older children participate in Iolair Usage and Bhuidhe Awards and identify personal goals they want to achieve. They are gaining knowledge about sustainability and caring for the local environment. All children have opportunities to participate in a growing range of out of school activities supported well by staff, parents and partners in the community. Children travel to local events to take part in running in Invergordon, basketball in Plockton and football in Alness. They are becoming skilled in Highland dancing and participate in the local Ceilidh. They make regular use of the village hall for physical and sporting activities and share experiences with Lochcarron for gymnastics. The school is aware of children's personal interests and knows the opportunities children would like.

### **Attainment over time**

- Over the past two years, the headteacher and staff have developed individualised tracking for each of the children. They know children well as individual learners and the progress they are making. Overall, most children are making good progress. The staff should continue to develop moderation and assessment to further strengthen their judgements about children's progress.

### **Equity for all learners**

- Staff, parents, carers and partners actively contribute to the life of the school. The close knit community and active Parent Council supports the work of the school effectively. Parents and carers regularly support the school's quest to provide children with a wide range of learning opportunities outside school. The geographical location of the school results in long journeys to reach other locations and events. The headteacher should monitor participation levels to ensure that distances and transport are not a barrier to learning and taking part.
- The school's allocation of Pupil Equity Funding is used to support developments in, and the use of, the outdoor learning area. The headteacher and staff need to monitor the developments and measure the impact this has on improving outcomes for children.

## School Empowerment

### ■ Learner participation

- This is a positive feature of the school. Children are actively involved in the life and work of the school. In the single multi-stage composite class all children contribute their views and opinions and do so confidently. They are effective communicators who are at ease with visitors and in promoting their school. Teachers are the key enablers in giving children their voice. This is a daily feature throughout the ongoing dialogue between teachers and children. The very positive and strong relationships between teachers and children develops an inclusive ethos where all feel valued.
- Children are listened to and their contributions through opinions and views are acted upon. This motivates children to take responsibilities for themselves and others. They have a very good knowledge and understanding as citizens which is developed through the relevant curriculum. They value their environment and take responsibilities in the wider community through enterprise and intergenerational work.
- All children have formal opportunities to participate in the pupil council and in a wide variety of clubs. They discuss things that are important to them and take decisions collectively. They are learning skills for learning, life and work. They are developing the four capacities of Curriculum for Excellence very effectively.

## Practice worth sharing more widely

The remote coastal location of the school is used very effectively to contextualise learning and make it relevant and meaningful. The class teacher is a highly motivated professional who makes a significant contribution to the effectiveness of the school and children's experiences. He uses his training in outdoor learning very effectively and is a professional who has skills and practice to share.

## 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.