

# Summarised inspection findings

**Achaleven Primary School**

Argyll and Bute Council

4 June 2019

## Key contextual information

- Achaleven Primary School is a small rural school. For a time, the school has been mothballed. At the time of the inspection, there were 12 children on the school roll who are taught in a multi-level class. The headteacher is also the children's main teacher. A part-time teacher covers the headteacher's management time for a day a week.
- The children are taught part of their physical education curriculum by a specialist teacher. For this, children travel to Oban High School. All children benefit from a weekly specialist input from a music instructor.

### 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

- The overall quality of learning, teaching and assessment is satisfactory. The headteacher is well-respected by parents. They appreciate her commitment to the school. The headteacher is enthusiastic about her dual role as headteacher and teacher of Achaleven Primary School.
- Children are friendly, articulate and eager to learn. Staff and children enjoy positive relationships, which are set within a warm and supportive ethos. There is impact of the work that the headteacher and staff have been prioritising to help build relationships and ethos. Children independently apply strategies for maintaining good relationships among each other. Staff have started to talk to children about national wellbeing indicators. These conversations should be more regular. It would be good to raise children's awareness of their rights as part of United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Staff have written a learning and teaching policy. While this is useful, it could be extended to include what constitutes good learning and teaching in a multi-level class. It would be well-judged to have a greater focus on approaches such as play-based learning and what it means for children to be independent in their learning. This would also set expectations of standards on which to base self-reflection, as well as formal observations. Staff would benefit from regular feedback on learning and teaching to ensure that children are maximising their successes and achievements.
- Children are motivated by a range of learning experiences. They learn both indoors and outdoors. Teachers use the school's garden and the local community to provide children with exciting and real-life contexts to learn across the curriculum. As a result of weekly specialist inputs in music, all children devote time to playing a musical instrument during their school week. Children enjoy singing. Some of children's learning for physical education takes place in the associated secondary school, which supports transition.
- Teachers share with children the purpose of learning and how they will know that they are successful. Children are not yet consistently able to articulate what they are learning. At times, this aspect of teaching is not taking account of the full range of abilities and information from

assessment. Teachers and children should be more systematic in reviewing how well the purpose of learning has been met.

- Children learn as a whole-class cohort, as well as in smaller groups. Smaller groups enable children to experience a better range of differentiated tasks. Children concentrate well on these tasks when they are appropriately matched to help children make the best possible progress in their learning. In such circumstances, children focus well and are independent of adult direction. Learning and teaching can be more challenging and more individualised to the learner. Children's engagement would be increased further with a brisker pace of learning. It would also be beneficial for adults assisting in class to be given more detailed information on how to fully support children's learning.
- Teachers make regular use of technology to support their teaching. They should continue to increase the range of ways digital technology is used. This should include as a way for children to communicate on their learning out with the school. Children confidently use laptop and tablet technology. This includes for researching the internet, recording their work and consolidating their learning using digital programmes. They use digital programmes to record themselves speaking French. Children also learn Gaelic as part of a 1+2 Approach to Languages. Learning of languages should now be planned as continuous communication, going beyond acquiring vocabulary.
- Teachers use standardised assessments to gauge progress and put interventions in place to improve progress. They should continue to build their expertise in designing holistic assessment tasks. This would support teacher professional judgements to be based on a wider range of assessment evidence. Moderation needs to be more systematic, and better support the national collection of data for Curriculum for Excellence. Moderation with the associated secondary school should be taken forward as part of effective planning for progression in learning and transition.
- Profiling is at an early stage. Children should more regularly discuss their learning and next steps. Feedback to children on how to improve their work needs to be linked more to national standards. At times, feedback needs to be more personalised to individuals.
- The school has a variety of planning approaches, over different timescales, in place. Planning for literacy is clearly differentiated for each child. It is not clear how well this planning is informing the learning and teaching in providing support, pace and challenge for all learners. The school now needs to consider planning, assessing, tracking and monitoring all curricular areas. Planning should be kept manageable. For further guidance, refer to, 'A Statement for Practitioners from HM Chief Inspector of Education', August 2016.
- The school monitors children's individual progress in literacy and English, and numeracy and mathematics. Staff should now develop further their ability in the use and analysis of data to inform effective planning, and tracking and monitoring. They should clarify the evidence to be gathered on individuals and groups to demonstrate effectively and consistently breadth, challenge and application across all areas of learning.
- The headteacher is aware of the school's role in raising attainment of all learners. This includes children who encounter barriers to their learning and children who require additional support.

## 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

satisfactory

This indicator focuses on the school's success in achieving the best possible outcomes for all learners. Success is measured in attainment across all areas of the curriculum and through the school's ability to demonstrate learners' achievements in relation to skills and attributes. Continuous improvement or sustained high standards over time is a key feature of this indicator. The themes are:

- attainment in literacy and numeracy
- attainment over time
- overall quality of learners' achievement
- equity for all learners

- The number of children in cohorts varies and is relatively small. Therefore, overall statements have been made about progression to ensure anonymity of individuals.

### Attainment over time

- Attainment over time is based on standardised assessments, including Scottish National Standardised Assessments (SNSA). Staff are also checking progress against "I can" statements in literacy and numeracy. This information is gathered for each child over their time in the school. All of this should be streamlined to give a clearer picture of children's progress, which is demonstrated by profiling. It would now be good to be definitive on whether children are on track with their attainment, including when they may have any barriers to their learning. This would assist the school in being clearer on progress and attainment. A next step is to compile strategic messages about how well the school is reducing the attainment gap.
- Teachers' professional judgements should be developed further. They would be more robust with stronger assessment and moderation based on the National Benchmarks. The school reports that in the most recent data collection, most children are attaining appropriate Curriculum for Excellence levels in listening, talking, reading and numeracy. The majority are doing so in writing. Children are making satisfactory progress. The school's strategic overview of raising attainment should better build into a picture of Curriculum for Excellence levels overtime.
- The school has had a focus on raising attainment, which has included reading, spelling and writing. There remains scope for all children to be more actively challenged in their learning, including higher attaining children. At the moment, expectations of what children are capable of achieving could be higher.
- At pace, the school should continue to put in place progression frameworks in all curricular areas, including health and wellbeing. This would help drive what is being taught and assessed in all four contexts of the curriculum.

### Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, children's attainment in literacy is good in listening, talking and reading at first and second level. At early level, attainment is satisfactory in these skills. Writing across levels is satisfactory. Children could be making better progress from prior levels of attainment in literacy and English language. By the second level, children are becoming clearer on the relevance of literacy as a skill for learning, life and work.

### Listening and talking

- The community gives children important ways of developing their confidence in performing to an audience. Children's contributions for many events are valued by the community. Children

recall situations in which they have presented talks and been involved in discussions. They understand how written text can support them in talk. Children readily share their experiences, views and opinions. They deploy a range of vocabulary and speak with grammatical accuracy. They are developing their skills in taking turns in discussions by listening to each other respectfully. The older children would benefit from taking part in more debates. At the early stage, particularly through play, interactions need to be more regular and progressive to enable children to be developing their imagination and talk.

## Reading

- By the second level, children express their enjoyment of reading. They are able to talk about their favourite authors and present a picture of having good reading habits at home. Children are able to talk about many characteristics of the writer's craft. They would benefit from engaging in more dialogue about this. Children's written reviews of book do not consistently encourage them to enlarge on their views of authors' work. Across stages, the majority of children read aloud well. The younger children's literacy skills are enhanced by Bookbug sessions. Children's skills in listening for information, and showing their understanding of text, are enhanced through storytelling sessions led by a member of the community.

## Writing

- Staff have been encouraging children's enjoyment of writing. It would be beneficial to have higher expectations of children's skills in writing. More clarity is needed in how writing is progressed as part of play-based learning. This should include appropriate expectations of when children should be writing independently. Frequent tests of change should be established when trialling new approaches to learning. The curriculum needs to realise a more structured approach to teaching writing across the range of purposes required in Curriculum for Excellence. In particular, children need to do more creative and imaginative writing to enable them to develop plots with clear structures. When producing writing across the curriculum, children should be expected to write to the same standard as required of them in literacy and language. Children should be encouraged to keep an overview of the types of writing they are producing. This would assist with monitoring that a range of writing is covered. There is significant scope to improve children's presentation of work to be appropriate for audience and of a sufficient standard. This is in terms of legibility of writing, spelling, correcting of errors, using headings and dating work.

## Attainment in numeracy and mathematics

- The school reports that almost all children are achieving appropriate levels in numeracy and mathematics. Progress is satisfactory. There is much scope for better-paced and more challenging learning and teaching to raise attainment.

## Number, money and measure

- Across the school, most children are developing their skills in different contexts, including problem-solving. At early level, children can count and write to ten. They identify the next number in a range to ten, and are beginning to demonstrate their skills in addition to ten. Children are ready for more challenging work on number sequence and to develop their understanding of measure through real-life contexts and play.
- Children recognise the difference between day and night. At first level, children accurately add and subtract to 100. They can calculate change from £5. Children compare analogue and digital time. They can discuss and demonstrate equivalent fractions. At second level, children accurately add and subtract to 1000. They understand differences in temperatures, including negative numbers. Children calculate durations of time. They explain multiplication and division to help them identify equivalent fractions and compare fractions, decimals and percentages. Children now need opportunities to apply their skills in a range of contexts.

- Children show a great enthusiasm for problem-solving. The younger children share a number of concrete materials equally and create repeating patterns using three colours. At first level, children can use their knowledge of the four functions to create balanced equations and solve word problems. Children are able to use different strategies to solve and check word problems. Children would now benefit from having more frequent, open-ended challenges which require them to apply their numeracy and mathematics in different contexts and real-life situations.

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

- Children can draw simple shapes in repeating patterns. At first level, children can identify 3D objects using the language of vertices, edges and faces. At second level, children can categorise 3D objects by their different properties. Across levels, children would benefit from a greater focus on 2D shapes. At first and second levels, there should be regular inputs on angle, symmetry and transformation.

### **Information handling**

- Across the school, children are given a few opportunities to develop data handling skills. Children use bar charts to share information from the book, *The Hungry Caterpillar*. They also produce bar and pie charts from data collected during the beach clean. Children at second level are ready for more challenge in handling information in real-life contexts and exploring the appropriate use of different ways to share results.

### **Overall quality of learners' achievement**

- Children have many opportunities for wider achievements, for which they contribute well to the life of the school and the wider community. Although not done so consistently, achievements are recognised and celebrated through profiles, the Year Book and skills jotters. There is now scope to track and monitor children's achievements more rigorously for participation, and development of capacities and skills. Children should be encouraged to articulate how the skills and attributes developed as a result of these achievements are improving their skills for learning, life and work.

### **Equity for all learners**

- The headteacher knows children well and is aware of any barriers to their learning. She puts targeted interventions in place to secure improvements and ensure equity for all. Children should build on their use of technology to maximise opportunities for communication given their rural location.

## 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.