

Summarised inspection findings

Alehousewells School

Aberdeenshire Council

10 June 2025

Key contextual information

Alehousewells Primary school is located in the town of Kemnay in Aberdeenshire. There are currently 114 children attending the primary stages, across six classes. Thirty-two children attend the nursery class. The acting headteacher has been in post since September 2024. The school is open plan in its layout, and children and staff have access to lots of space and learning areas. The school grounds and local area beside the river Don also offer opportunities for learning and play. Most children live in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation deciles 3-6. The school reports around half of the children need extra help with their learning.

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 acting headteacher provides strong leadership. Since arriving in school, she has gained the confidence of all staff, children and parents. Prior to her appointment, the school experienced disruption to leadership. This had a negative impact on children's learning, progress and behaviour. Under her leadership, the staff team has created a calm ethos which supports learning and teaching across the school. As an important first step, the team has reviewed their use of the large open-plan areas and break-out spaces to support improved engagement and behaviour for children across the school. The headteacher should keep this under review to ensure children are supported by adults in the break-out areas and that quality learning is taking place.
- Staff know the children, their families and the community very well. Children experience warm and caring relationships across the school community. Most children behave well in school and in the playground. When children demonstrate dysregulated behaviour, they are well supported by staff in class and in calm break-out spaces. Staff are attuned to the needs of children and provide appropriate interventions as and when required to support children's emotional regulation. The headteacher has set clear boundaries for children and expectations for all staff in supporting children, and in managing their behaviour. Staff, children and parents report that behaviour in the school has improved significantly since the appointment of the acting headteacher.
- Most children are engaged in their learning. They listen to instructions and work well together in groups and pairs. Support staff work well with children who need extra help. This includes individual and group support and differentiated tasks. In the most effective lessons, where there is sufficient pace and challenge, children are motivated and active participants in their learning. This is not yet a consistent experience for children across the school. At all stages, children would benefit from more challenge in their learning. Children note that learning is often too easy. In too many lessons, children complete tasks very quickly and move on to 'end of work' or 'choosing' activities that lack sufficient relevance or challenge. As the staff team

continues to embed the agreed whole school approaches to learning and teaching, they should ensure children participate in learning activities that promote greater independence and choice.

- Children at early level enjoy learning through play. Staff provide an effective balance of teacher-directed, child-led and child-initiated activities. Children have access to quality resources and activities. As planned, staff should work together to promote opportunities for children to be creative and innovative in their learning as they move through the school. They should ensure these experiences provide sufficient challenge and progression across the curriculum. Children across the school would benefit from opportunities to learn outdoors and in the local area.
- Most teachers explain the purpose of lessons and support children well to identify steps for success. Their explanations and instructions are clear. In the majority of lessons, teachers make effective use of questioning to check children's understanding. They should continue to develop questioning skills to promote curiosity and higher order thinking skills. Teachers should also improve the quality of questions provided on worksheets which are often low level and repetitive. Most staff provide children with encouraging verbal feedback on how to improve their work. Moving forward, staff should develop a whole school approach to ensuring children also receive high quality written feedback, that celebrates success and identifies next steps clearly.
- In most lessons, teachers use digital technology well to introduce learning and illustrate and model expectations. In a few classes, children use digital devices regularly to enhance and support their learning. This includes digital games and activities to build on the numeracy concepts they are developing. Older children have accurately identified the need for more challenging and more varied activities.
- Across the school staff have begun to use a range of assessment tools appropriately to measure children's progress in literacy and numeracy. This includes standardised assessments and core resource check-ups. Approaches to assessment are not yet consistently robust across the school. In recent years, assessment data recorded is not sufficiently accurate. As planned, the headteacher and staff team should develop an assessment strategy to support teacher professional judgement and implement effective assessment approaches across all stages. This should include the use of national Benchmarks across all curriculum areas.
- All staff use a range of long, medium and short-term plans. They highlight what is to be covered across the curriculum. Staff use a range of planning tools from a variety of sources. The plans do not always provide clear information about learning activities, resources or what is to be assessed. Assessment is not yet integral to planning. Staff should review approaches to planning. In doing so, they should refer to national guidance in relation to the learning, teaching and assessment cycle. They should ensure plans developed are manageable and do not add to workload.
- The acting headteacher has introduced processes for tracking and monitoring children's learning and attainment. This is supporting staff to better understand the progress of individual children, groups and cohorts. Regular monitoring discussions support the identification of individual needs leading to interventions for children who need additional help in literacy, numeracy and wellbeing. Teachers and support staff work well together to provide learning and activities to improve outcomes across the school. All of this is at an early stage of implementation. Staff should continue to develop this work, alongside improvements in learning, teaching and assessment.

2.1 Safeguarding and child protection

- The school submitted self-evaluation information related to child protection and safeguarding. Inspectors discussed this information with relevant staff and, where appropriate, children. In addition, inspectors examined a sample of safeguarding documentation. At the time of the inspection, there were no identified areas for development.

3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

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

Attainment in literacy and numeracy

- The overall quality of attainment is satisfactory. Across the school the majority of children are on track to achieve national standards in literacy and English and mathematics and numeracy. A number of factors, including disrupted learning in the previous year, has had an impact on learning and teaching, and children's progress. Children who need additional support with their learning are making satisfactory levels of progress from their prior levels of learning.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Across the school children are making satisfactory progress in literacy and numeracy.

Listening and talking

- Across the school, the majority of children are articulate and eager to engage in conversation. At early level, most children participate actively in songs, rhymes and stories. They listen well to a range of simple texts and respond confidently to questions during class discussions. They would benefit from listening to more complex stories beyond simple picture books. The majority of children working towards first level are developing skills in small groups discussions. They are learning to take turns and express their views. At second level, the majority of children show respect for the views of others and contribute relevant ideas when engaging with others. A few children at each stage need supported to contribute with confidence in class activities.

Reading

- At early level, most children hear and say different single sounds made by letters. They are developing skills in using their knowledge of sounds, letters and patterns to read simple words. At first level, the majority of children read aloud with confidence. They now need to improve their fluency and expression. The majority of children find information in texts and make simple notes to summarise key facts. At second level, most children articulate well their preferred authors and genre for reading for enjoyment. They scan texts confidently to respond to questions and identify main ideas. They are developing skills in commenting on the writer's use of language. Older children would like access to and would benefit from a wider range of novels, including humour and fantasy.

Writing

- At early level, the majority of children are developing skills for writing. They make attempts to spell familiar words correctly. A few are beginning to write simple sentences using a capital letter and full stop. The majority of children at first level start sentences in a variety of ways to engage the reader and make their writing more interesting. A few write independently with accurate punctuation and spelling. At second level, the majority of children write confidently

for a range of purposes, including diaries, letters and descriptions. Staff should continue to ensure children have opportunities to write across a broad range of genres including reports, stories, poems and scripts. Across the school, children need increased opportunities to write regularly and at length. Children should be challenged to demonstrate and apply their writing skills in relevant real-life contexts. This should include using digital tools.

Numeracy and mathematics

- The majority of children are making satisfactory progress in numeracy and mathematics. Across the school, children would benefit from opportunities to demonstrate and apply their numeracy and mathematics skills in real-life and unfamiliar settings. They would also benefit from planned learning in all aspects of mathematics across the year. There is often too long a gap between revisiting concepts and themes.

Number, money and measure

- At early level, most children are working with numbers up to 20. A majority of children identify a number one more and add and subtract within 10 accurately. Most children measure the capacity of objects using non-standard units. At first level, a majority of children demonstrate an understanding of place value and round numbers to the nearest 10 and 100. Children write, order and sequence numbers within a thousand. They require support to confidently use the four operations, including using these to solve problems. A few children use money to pay for items and rehearse their skills through a play cafe. They lack confidence in working out change from a given amount. The majority of children identify units of measure and the appropriate instrument for the task. At second level, the majority of children perform a range of calculations confidently using whole numbers and decimal fractions to two decimal places. They calculate simple percentages of a quantity and are beginning to use this knowledge to solve problems in everyday contexts. The majority of children carry out money calculations using the four operations. They find the perimeter and area of simple two-dimensional (2D) shapes and should now develop their understanding of measuring the volume of a simple three-dimensional (3D) object. Across the school, children need to develop their understanding and application of a variety of strategies to support mental calculations.

Shape, position and movement

- At early and first level, the majority of children name 2D shapes and 3D objects. At early level, most children match 3D objects to everyday shapes. At first level, children lack the technical vocabulary to describe the properties of shapes and objects. At second level, the majority of children use mathematical language well to describe the properties of angles. This includes acute, obtuse, straight and reflex to describe and classify a range of angles identified within shapes in the environment.

Information handling

- At early level, the majority of children create pictorial displays to classify objects and answer questions. At first level, the majority of children gather information using tally marks and display this information in a variety of different ways including line and bar graphs. They have a good understanding of the features of bar graphs. The majority of children at second level identify different ways to display data and share examples of ways they apply their skills in areas of their learning. As children's digital skills develop, they should explore ways of using technology to gather, analyse and display data.

Attainment over time

- In recent years, attainment across the school has been variable and limited data is available. The acting headteacher is now ensuring that robust and reliable data is gathered and recorded. Moving forward, staff should ensure children make progress across all areas of the curriculum. Whilst the majority of children are making satisfactory progress across literacy

and English and numeracy and mathematics, there is no clear evidence of progress across the wider curriculum. Children experience regular high quality physical education that supports their progress in this area. Staff do not yet provide sufficient progressive learning across expressive arts, science, technology and social studies. This is having a negative impact on progress and attainment in these areas.

- Overall attendance is in line with the national average. There are clear procedures in place to track and monitor children's attendance. Effective partnership working has supported the development of positive relationships with families. There is evidence that appropriate interventions such as the provision of a counselling service, are improving attendance for a few identified children. There are no children on part-time timetables.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Children are very proud of their achievements in school and at home. Staff highlight and celebrate children's achievements in a range of ways. These include wall displays, recognition of school values at assemblies and through termly class newsletters and digital platforms. A wider achievement tracker in each class identifies the activities for each child, allowing staff to identify and address any gaps of experiences.
- Children are proud of the contribution they make to the life of the school and the skills certificates and badges they receive as a result. Recent work is supporting children to become more confident in identifying the skills used in their learning. This aspect of school life is at the early stages of being embedded. As children move through the school, they participate in a variety of leadership roles. This is beginning to build their confidence and skills in decision making and supporting others. Children are motivated by the work of their houses and leadership groups. They are proud of their success in promoting children's rights, and in gaining accreditation in national awards. Older children enjoy running lunchtime clubs for children at all stages, making effective use of their play leader accreditation. These opportunities support well the development of children's skills for learning, life and work.

Equity for all learners

- Staff have a very good understanding of the social, economic and cultural background of children. The acting headteacher uses Pupil Equity Funds (PEF) to provide additional staffing and resources. Staff funded through PEF, support targeted groups of children who face barriers to learning with a focus on raising attainment in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. All staff are mindful of the impact of the current cost of living crisis. School events with a financial implication are minimised. Recycled school uniform supplies are made available to all families. Children who are care experienced receive art and team building sessions. This is supporting their health and wellbeing.

Other relevant evidence

- All children participate in two hours high quality physical education each week.
- The acting headteacher has plans to involve stakeholders in determining PEF spend.

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.