

Summarised inspection findings

Kilmartin Primary School

Argyll and Bute Council

28 March 2023

Key contextual information

Kilmartin Primary School and ELC is in a very remote rural location in Argyll and Bute. The school is one mile from the village of Kilmartin and eight miles north of the small town of Lochgilphead. The school roll is 31 children. There are two multi-composite classes. Most children reside in decile six of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation data zones. The headteacher is the only senior leader in the school and has been in the permanent post for five years, having previously been in the post of acting headteacher. During the last academic year there have been staffing challenges related to absence. As a result children have experienced some inconsistency in teaching staff and the headteacher provides teaching cover when supply staff are not available.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

weak

This indicator focuses on ensuring high-quality learning experiences for all children and young people. It highlights the importance of highly-skilled staff who work with children, young people and others to ensure learning is motivating and meaningful. Effective use of assessment by staff and learners ensures children and young people maximise their successes and achievements. The themes are:

- learning and engagement
- quality of teaching
- effective use of assessment
- planning, tracking and monitoring

- Children display more prolonged levels of engagement when learning reflects real and meaningful contexts and their interests. When motivated, children work well together in pairs and groups and are enthusiastic in their learning. This approach to engaging children in their learning needs to be more consistent across the school to improve the quality of children's learning experiences. This will reduce the low-level disruption which occurs in most lessons. Across the school, the pace of learning does not match the needs of learners. In a few lessons, children work at appropriately challenging tasks. Too many tasks involve the simple completion of work sheets. Children's learning should be planned more carefully to ensure learning activities more accurately match the needs and interests of individual children. The headteacher and staff have identified within the improvement plan the need to implement changes to learning and teaching through professional learning.
- Most teachers give clear instructions about the tasks they want children to complete. However, in most lessons teachers do not ensure all children are listening to their instructions and explanations. As a result, children often need further support to begin and sustain a learning task. Most teachers use questioning to check children's understanding. A few teachers use open-ended questions to extend children's thinking. Staff need to ensure all children feel included, valued and work as part of a team in all planned learning.
- Across the school, teachers share learning intentions and success criteria with children at the start of each lesson. Children, however, are still not always clear about the purpose of the learning. The majority of children can talk about what they are doing but not consistently about what they are learning. Teachers need to work with children to identify appropriate success criteria so that children have a clearer understanding of what they need to do to improve. This should also provide additional challenge for all children and improve their motivation.

- Teachers of younger children are at the early stages of implementing play-based pedagogy. Staff would benefit from further professional learning and use of the early years national practice guidance, *Realising the Ambition: Being Me*. This will strengthen staff's understanding of learning through play and develop a fuller understanding of the role of the adult in the learning environment. As planned, school staff should link more closely with practitioners in the early learning and childcare setting to share practice. This will develop further play based pedagogy across the early level and beyond.
- Children are accessing digital technology in a variety of contexts. Children access laptops in classrooms to enhance learning, for example, researching and creating fact files. Maximising the potential of digital technology, including children using the interactive boards in class, is not yet of a consistently high quality across the school.
- Children are increasingly involved in self-assessment, but this is not yet embedded consistently across the school. Children use an online communication tool effectively to self-reflect and assess their own work. This is shared with parents and carers and aims to promote an increase in parental engagement. As planned, the headteacher should ensure staff's consistent and effective use of feedback.
- Teachers plan learning over a variety of timescales. They take children's interests and ideas into account when planning learning across different subject areas. Children share what they already know and what they would like to learn. Children enjoy this approach and can talk about what they have been learning in themes including space, Scottish poems, stories and songs.
- Teachers check children's progress in literacy and numeracy using local authority tracking tools. The headteacher discusses tracking information with class teachers at scheduled meetings three times per year. There needs to be a clearer focus during these discussions on the actions necessary to raise attainment for individual children, identified groups and cohorts. The headteacher and teachers should continue to develop their analysis and use of data to inform planning and monitor children's progress closely. They need to ensure that all children make better progress in their learning, including those who require more challenge. A more systematic approach should be used throughout the school to ensure that all children are able to play a much fuller role in understanding and leading their learning.
- There is a need to improve the learning ethos which across the school is too often adult led. As a result, children demonstrate variable levels of engagement depending on the type of learning experiences and contexts. Too often children experience interrupted learning and lack motivation in a range of situations within the classroom setting. The headteacher and staff should prioritise the improvement of the ethos and culture of the school. They must ensure a commitment to children's rights and relationships is embedded across the life and work of the school. Children should be supported by staff to take responsibility for their choices and actions. Pre-inspection questionnaires for P4-7 pupils indicate that almost all children feel that other children do not treat them with respect. A minority of children feel that they are listened to and that their views are considered. Therefore, there is a need to listen to children's views, concerns and involve others where necessary.

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 that need to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

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

- Due to small numbers on the school roll and the risk of identifying individual children, attainment and progress will be expressed in 'overall' statements, rather than for specific year groups.
- Most children are making satisfactory progress in literacy and numeracy. At early level, the majority of children achieve early CfE level in reading, writing, listening and talking and numeracy. At first level, a minority of children are achieving first level in listening and talking, reading, writing and numeracy. At second level, almost all children achieve second level in listening and talking, the majority of children are achieving second level in reading, writing and numeracy.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, most children are making satisfactory progress in literacy and English from their prior levels of attainment.

Listening and talking

- Across the school, most children are eager to contribute their ideas, and bring much from life experiences to contribute to discussions. Most older children can identify the main ideas of texts they have listened to or watched. They make notes on the main ideas, which they use to create new texts such as fact files. Most children require support to take turns and listen to the ideas and opinions of adults and each other.

Reading

- Overall, most children enjoy reading and make personal choices about what they read during quiet reading time. The library areas in both classes give children access to a good range of reading materials. Older children are encouraged to link their reading and writing skills by researching their own personal topics and produce informative fact files. Children complete reading comprehension assessments on a regular basis which show that they understand the texts they are reading. They now need to develop their confidence in answering increasingly complex questions about the texts they are reading. Older children would benefit from access to texts of a longer length to develop their reading stamina. This will also improve their use and independence when including relevant vocabulary in writing tasks. Older children need to be more consistently supported to develop their reading skills by more regular adult support with their reading development.

Writing

- A few younger children are beginning to write independently. The majority of younger children know how to write common words. Across the school all children write weekly to recall events

at the weekend. They write descriptions for a fictional catalogue, retell stories linked to the local area and create fact files. Most children are unable to discuss the differing features of writing genres. They would benefit from having more frequent opportunities to develop their writing skills across the curriculum. This should be at a level appropriate to their ability and for a variety of purposes linked to real and meaningful contexts. Children at all stages have a satisfactory understanding of grammar and punctuation and have personal targets for improving these aspects of their writing.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Overall children are making satisfactory progress in numeracy and mathematics.

Number, money and measure

- Most of the youngest children recognise and use numbers from 0 to 10. The majority can add and subtract within ten. Older children can add and subtract three-digit numbers successfully. They are confident using place value. They can estimate the size of objects and spaces. Children benefit from regular practise solving word problems. This helps them consolidate learning on money, profit and loss and apply addition and subtraction skills to work out amounts. Across the school, most children enjoy mental mathematics and problem solving and benefit from regular opportunities to develop their skills and strategies. All children are aware of multiplication and division at their stage of learning and regularly practise times tables. Older children understand perimeter, area and can identify diameter and radius within circles. A recent interdisciplinary project on space extended and consolidated most children's understanding of mass and weight appropriate to their stage. Older children would benefit from revisiting the concepts of probability and chance. Across all stages, children should develop further their application of numeracy and mathematical skills, knowledge and strategies using real life contexts. This should improve children's application of their knowledge and consolidate their learning.

Shape, position and movement

- Younger children can identify two-dimensional shapes with the majority understanding the properties of three-dimensional objects. Most can recognise symmetry within simple shapes and explain their properties. Overall, the majority of older children are confident with their knowledge of a variety of angles including right, obtuse and acute angles.

Information handling

- Younger children can read pictograms and can interpret simple graphs and charts. Older children use a variety of different methods to gather data from real life contexts including a daily exercise routine. Children across the school should develop independence in analysing and interpreting data and be challenged to discuss their findings and conclusions. This will build upon their understanding of the impact of mathematics and influence in the world of life and work.

Attainment over time

- The small roll and cohort size at Kilmartin Primary School, has influenced trends in attainment data over time. Overall, the data presented by the school demonstrates that the majority of children are achieving appropriate Curriculum for Excellence levels in literacy and numeracy, relative to their age and stage. For children with additional barriers to learning, most are attaining appropriate to their individual level of need. Staff should ensure that more rigorous tracking of attainment over time takes place. This should support teachers to focus interventions and resources on groups of children who are not making expected progress or for whom progress could be accelerated.

Overall quality of learner's achievements

- Children's personal achievements are shared at school assemblies, displayed on a 'Celebrating Success Wall', through headteacher awards and using online communication platforms. These achievements are linked to the school values and curriculum areas. This is developing children's awareness of the skills they are acquiring as a result of these achievements.
- The headteacher tracks children's achievements carefully to ensure nobody is missing out. Staff should explore, outline and share with children the skills for learning, life and work developed through these achievements. Staff should also look at developing further links to the four capacities. This will ensure staff and children take increasing responsibility for recognising and adding value to their achievements.

Equity for all learners

- All staff have a clear understanding of the socio-economic and cultural context of the rural community and are aware of the challenges facing families. These include the impact of higher transport costs and increased energy costs that can limit children's learning experiences.
- The headteacher and staff make the most of opportunities to involve children in a wide range of activities and projects with partners. Children work with wildlife rangers, visiting expressive arts specialists and a local authority cultural coordinator. Children enjoyed a recent visit to the Glasgow Science Centre which supported learning across the curriculum. These links enrich the curriculum and all children access them. The Parent Council support the school very enthusiastically. They fund different educational trips and activities to ensure no child is at risk of missing out.
- The head teacher has outlined in the school improvement plan the planned use of the Pupil Equity Funding (PEF). Plans aim to improve attainment in literacy and English and improve wellbeing. Planned improvements have not yet taken place. The headteacher and staff now need to ensure planned actions are undertaken promptly. Approaches to monitor the impact on improving equity, raising attainment and closing gaps in attainment should be developed and implemented and the impact on learners monitored and evaluated.

Other relevant evidence

- The school provides children with two hours of physical education per week. The headteacher should monitor the quality of this provision to evaluate the quality of the learning experiences and ensure it builds upon prior learning.

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.