

Summarised inspection findings

Gledfield Primary School

The Highland Council

14 May 2024

Key contextual information

Gledfield Primary School is located in a rural, coastal setting serving the local community of Ardgay and catchment areas on the South side of the Kyle of Sutherland. The school roll is 24 pupils, organised across two classes. There have been significant staffing issues in recent years. The headteacher took up post in January 2023. Prior to her appointment, the school had three different headteachers over a two-year period. The headteacher has leadership responsibility for Gledfield Primary School and Edderton Primary School. Staff and children from both schools work together regularly.

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

- All staff demonstrate a commitment to ensuring that children are happy and safe at school. This results in a warm and welcoming school in which children are valued. The headteacher has established trusting and productive relationships across the school community. They have gained the trust of staff and parents after a period of transitional leadership. The headteacher reviewed the school's values recently in consultation with the school community. 'Determination', a new value, was added to the existing values of 'honesty, kindness and respect'. Staff and children demonstrate the school values in their interactions and quality of relationships across the school. Staff have made a positive start in developing children's understanding of their rights.
- Children, parents and staff welcome the positive impact of the headteacher's leadership on the ethos and relationships throughout the school. They have brought much needed stability to the school. Staff and parents have trust and confidence in the headteacher's ability to continue to lead and improve further the work of the school. Staff feel supported, motivated, listened to and valued by the headteacher. They are keen to develop their skills further.
- The headteacher demonstrates important leadership qualities which are enabling them to lead change and improvement across the school. They have gathered a wide range of views and data to accurately identify the strengths of the school and key priorities for improvement. The headteacher has quickly identified the need to improve leadership and self-evaluation across the school. There is limited evidence that leadership of change over recent years has improved outcomes for children. There has been significant change in leadership and staffing. This has had an impact on the pace of change. The headteacher recognises the need to ensure the whole school community contributes to effective self-evaluation. They are developing robust approaches to monitor the work of the school involving the staff team as well as children, parents and partners. Staff are developing an understanding of their role in evaluating the work of the school and supporting improvements. They recognise the progress made in improving children's wellbeing. Staff need to take prompt action to improve approaches to planning high-quality learning and teaching for all learners.

- Staff's approaches to self-evaluation are not yet sufficiently robust. The headteacher now needs to continue to use self-evaluation evidence more effectively with all staff to identify appropriate improvement priorities with clear actions, timescales and measures of accountability. It will be important for all staff to closely monitor the impact of changes to ensure they lead to improved outcomes for learners. The headteacher is mindful of the need to manage the strategic direction and pace of change carefully to ensure that it is sustainable. The headteacher has established a constructive dialogue with the Parent Council and the wider parent body. Parents are very supportive of the school and keen to contribute to improvements. The headteacher has established a helpful parental engagement calendar to support improvement and collaboration. This includes opportunities such as classroom visits and parent workshops. Parents welcome the increasing number of opportunities to engage with the school. For example, parents helped shape the delivery of the relationships and sexual health programme.
- Staff have engaged in professional learning linked to the school improvement plan. This has had a focus on improving approaches to listening and talking and high-quality assessments. There are positive signs of progress in these areas. The headteacher and staff should now build on this positive start and engage in professional learning to improve further approaches to learning, teaching and assessment.
- The headteacher has introduced a quality assurance calendar. This is at the early stages of implementation. Teachers value the recently introduced opportunities for professional dialogue with the headteacher related to attainment. These are supporting staff to implement interventions that are improving attainment. For example, staff have introduced successful approaches to listening and talking and spelling. The headteacher and local authority staff have undertaken visits to classrooms and provided feedback highlighting what is working well and areas for staff to develop further. Staff should continue with planned professional learning and dialogue to strengthen the quality of teachers' planning and learners' experiences further. As planned, staff should ensure records of professional learning are kept in order to identify progress in relation to identified next steps.
- All staff engage in professional review and development meetings. The headteacher should continue to support all teachers to regularly reflect on their practice using the relevant General Teaching Council for Scotland professional standards. Teachers should use the standards to identify appropriate targets and professional learning to support their continuous development.
- The headteacher is re-establishing opportunities for children to develop their leadership skills. Children are increasingly motivated by the groups. They talk positively about groups such as playground leaders, anti-bullying ambassadors and digital leaders. These groups support school self-evaluation activities by seeking pupil views of school improvement initiatives. As a result, older children feel confident and encouraged by their role in the school. Children are ready to take on more leadership roles and opportunities. They identify a range of groups that they would like to see reintroduced or newly created. As planned, the headteacher should continue to extend opportunities for children to take greater responsibility for wider aspects of school life.
- Staff have a clear understanding of the local context and needs of the school. The headteacher consults with staff and the Parent Council on the allocation of Pupil Equity Funding (PEF). They use this funding to increase pupil support assistant time to provide targeted support in literacy and numeracy. The headteacher recognises the need to carefully monitor and evaluate the impact of this resource in reducing the poverty related attainment gap. Moving forward, the headteacher should ensure that all parents and learners are involved actively in determining the focus of the PEF spend for their school.

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

- Staff have created a caring and supportive ethos reflecting the recently refreshed vision, values and aims. Relationships between staff and children, and between children, are positive and respectful. Staff are building on this by supporting children to develop an understanding of children's rights. Children are kind and offer support and help to each other within multi-composite classes and across the school, as a result. They demonstrate positive behaviour with each other and promote the school values of honesty, kindness, respect and determination in their interactions. They are polite, articulate and keen to engage with visitors.
- Across the school, staff provide a calm and friendly learning environment where most children are settled, motivated and ready to engage in learning. Children enjoy increased opportunities to work in pairs or groups. They support and work well with each other. In a few lessons, teachers provide activities at different levels, linking learning activities to real-life contexts and the world of work. These are not yet of a high enough quality to meet the needs of all children. Teachers need to improve the structure and pace of lessons to ensure children are actively engaged in their learning and encouraged to be more independent. This will ensure appropriate levels of support and challenge within learning. The headteacher and teaching staff should take prompt action to develop a shared understanding of high-quality learning and teaching. Staff would benefit from visits to other schools to support with this.
- In most lessons, teachers' instructions and explanations are clear. In a majority of lessons, teachers share the purpose of learning and outline the steps children need to be successful. Teachers should now consider ways to include children more regularly in co-creating what success should look like. This will help children to identify progress and their next steps in learning. As planned, the headteacher should continue to work with teachers to refine how they share the purpose of learning with children. They should ensure that this accurately reflects the intended learning in line with Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) experiences and outcomes.
- Teachers provide verbal feedback to children on their effort and engagement with learning tasks. Staff should work together to improve the quality of feedback to children to support them in making progress in their learning. Teachers use questioning to check for understanding. They now need to improve their questioning to help extend children's thinking, consolidate learning and provide additional challenge. Teachers should work on developing a range of higher-order questions to support them in their teaching approaches. They should consider how to improve the use of displays to provide examples of high-quality work and share expected standards with children. This includes the presentation of children's work within the classroom.
- Older children benefit from having their own dedicated digital device for learning. In a majority of lessons, teachers make increased use of digital technologies, such as laptops and interactive whiteboards, to support children's learning. Children use online search engines to

research famous scientists. They access online games to consolidate recent learning in literacy and numeracy. Teachers should continue to develop approaches to using technology across the curriculum to enhance children's experiences.

- Across the school, staff would benefit from opportunities to develop further their knowledge and skills of play-based learning. Teachers should now take time to work with practitioners in the nursery to develop their knowledge and understanding of effective play pedagogy. To support this further, teachers should engage with national guidance to develop the quality of experiences, spaces and interactions. They should look at the role of the adult and ensure that children's experiences are of a high-quality.
- Staff are continuing to review and adapt approaches to planning. Teachers welcome the recently introduced progression frameworks linked to CfE experiences and outcomes and national Benchmarks to support planning in literacy and numeracy. They recognise these progression frameworks will help them to plan more effectively for children's progress. The headteacher should continue to improve the planning process to support teachers to provide high-quality experiences for all children. This should include how teaching time is used to meet the needs of all learners. Too many lessons are resource based and teacher led. Childrens' experiences are being diminished, as a result. Staff should now plan more clearly for different groups and individuals within the class to ensure they make appropriate progress in their learning.
- The headteacher identifies correctly that they need to support teachers develop a better understanding of effective approaches to planning and assessment. Teachers participate in moderation activities within school and with other local schools to develop their understanding of national standards. Staff should continue with plans to engage further in moderation at school and cluster level. This should help teachers to have a more consistent understanding of children's progress and achievement of a CfE level.
- The headteacher has recently introduced a helpful assessment calendar. This outlines when key assessments will take place across the school year. This includes high-quality assessments and standardised assessments for literacy and numeracy. Assessment is not yet an integral part of planned learning and teaching. The headteacher needs to continue to extend approaches to assessment to ensure that all teachers can better support children to demonstrate progress, particularly in literacy and numeracy. It is important that staff now work together to ensure results from assessments directly influence teaching and learning. This should ensure all children, including those who require additional challenge, make appropriate progress through CfE levels.
- The headteacher has created a new system to check on children's progress. Staff require more time and support to embed this system. They should work together to ensure information provided for the overall tracking of attainment is accurate. Staff use the analysis of data to identify children that are not on track and plan interventions for children who require support for learning. They should now use this data to help them have a clearer focus on raising attainment. Staff should ensure all supports and interventions are reviewed regularly to ensure they raise attainment for children.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- The absence of clear learning pathways in all curricular areas is impacting on children's entitlement to a relevant and progressive broad general education. The headteacher has identified as a priority, the development of a curriculum which reflects the current context of the school and meets the needs of all learners. The school is at the early stages of implementing progression pathways across literacy and numeracy. These pathways include reference to the experiences and outcomes, national Benchmarks and offer opportunities to record relevant assessment information. All teachers should now plan learning across the curriculum using progressive learning pathways. This will help teachers to ensure planned experiences build on children's prior learning and skills, and support progression for all children.
- Staff should ensure that interdisciplinary learning focuses more on the progression of knowledge and skills across curriculum areas. In a few classes, there is too great a focus on activities and tasks which are not consistently linked to the development of children's knowledge and skills.
- All children are receiving their full entitlement to two hours of high-quality PE per week. PE is currently taught by the PE specialist teacher. The local authority's progression pathway for PE is used effectively to support planning, continuity, and progression in learning experiences. The PE specialist teacher provides a range of high-quality opportunities for children to learn skills in cross country, badminton, dance and gymnastics. The headteacher should now work with teachers to improve coherence in the health and wellbeing curriculum from P1 to P7. This will support them to track children's progress in all aspects of health and wellbeing. It will also ensure children develop skills and knowledge across all aspects of the health and wellbeing curriculum.
- Children are routinely given the opportunity to take their learning outdoors. The headteacher recognises the need to develop a progressive programme for outdoor learning to enhance children's knowledge of the local area and learning for sustainability. In doing so, they should enlist the support of parents and wider community partners.
- Staff take forward enthusiastically the Scottish Government's '1 + 2 language policy'. Across stages, all children learn French. The younger children are beginning to learn Gaelic. Staff should increase their use of the Statutory Guidance for Gaelic Education (2017) to create a progressive pathway for Gaelic (Learners). This should link to options for Gaelic (Learners) at the secondary stages. As Gaelic (Learners) moves through the school, teachers should ensure that, from P5 to P7, all children learn a second modern language. Older children are taught by a music specialist weekly. They are given the opportunity to participate in chanter and violin. These opportunities allow children to develop their creativity and performance skills.
- Children have good links with the local library. Library staff provide classes with reading materials to support their learning. This provides children with a fresh choice of texts to choose from on a frequent basis. Staff should continue to build on the recent improvements to their own school library to further support reading for enjoyment.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- All staff work well to develop positive relationships with parents that are welcoming and inclusive. Almost all parents report that they feel their child is safe, respected and treated fairly, as a result. The quality of relationships with parents results in children feeling safe and happy about school.
- Parents appreciate the increased range of strategies school staff use to keep them informed about the work of the school. These include newsletters, class termly overviews and online platforms. A few parents would like earlier notice of diary dates. The headteacher uses a range of approaches to gather feedback and suggestions from families, such as digital surveys and questionnaires. Most parents feel comfortable approaching the school with questions and suggestions, as a result. Staff have developed effective partnerships with parents. They provide helpful information to support children's learning at home. For example, through holding parent workshops and sharing high-quality assessments.
- The Parent Council works effectively in partnership with school staff and fundraise regularly for the school. This partnership is enhancing the work of staff in supporting families and overcoming barriers to learning. All children benefit from the resources and valuable social experiences the Parent Council provides.

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

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

- Children benefit from very positive relationships with staff and with each other. This creates a supportive and caring ethos where children are well-mannered, respectful and kind. Children understand well the school values and demonstrate these in their day-to-day interactions with others.
- Most children successfully identify someone in school with whom they can talk if they are upset or have any concerns. Older children support and play with younger children well in the playground as part of their playground leader responsibilities. This is supporting all children across the school to build positive friendships and feel safe and confident. All staff are fully aware of their role and responsibilities in ensuring the safety of children. Almost all children and most parents report the school deals appropriately with bullying or that they have never experienced bullying.
- Children have a clear understanding of their wellbeing. They discuss regularly what they need to do to be safe and healthy. Children give appropriate examples of how staff support them to be safe, healthy, active, nurtured, achieve, respected, responsible and included. For example, children understand the importance of different types of food to keep healthy. Children talk confidently about factors that contribute to positive wellbeing, such as physical activity. Most children share that they have lots of opportunities to get regular exercise in school. They engage enthusiastically in a wide range of activities including ball skills and team games. These opportunities help boost children's self-esteem, motivation and fitness.
- Staff are beginning to engage with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Teachers and children have created class charters. As a result, children are beginning to talk about their rights, the rights of others and why this is important for their wellbeing. Staff need to develop a more consistent approach to developing a shared understanding of children's rights. They should use the appropriate language of this in learning and assemblies. Staff are at an early stage of implementing an anti-bullying programme. A group of children has been established to be involved in this work. As planned, staff should review their anti-bullying policy to reflect the language from national guidance. This should be linked to the school's refreshed values and the work being undertaken on children's rights. This will support all children to fully understand their needs and rights under the UNCRC.
- As a result of annual training and guidance, all staff understand and apply the statutory requirements and codes of practice in relation to child protection and safeguarding. The headteacher is at the early stages of implementing an effective whole school system to identify children who require additional support for their learning. Existing child plans highlight targeted interventions for individuals. Children and parents are asked to share their views and agree targets and actions. In all child plans, targets need to be more specific and measurable. Overall, staff need to evidence better children's progress in relation to individual targets. This

will ensure interventions are effective and lead to improved outcomes for children. Teachers need to take greater account of the range of children's needs within their classes. They need to ensure that learning experiences and the classroom environment meet more effectively the needs of all children. This includes the effective deployment of support staff. Staff should be supported to develop an effective universal offer of support across the school. They need to have high aspirations for all children. This would enhance children's opportunities for success and achievement.

- The headteacher monitors attendance regularly. Currently, the school's overall attendance is slightly above the national average. The headteacher should now ensure that procedures to address non-attendance are followed consistently for all children whose non-attendance is causing concern. They should keep detailed records of actions taken and the impact to support all children at risk of missing out.
- Through the delivery of the health and wellbeing curriculum, children are beginning to develop knowledge and skills in areas such as relationships, sexual health and parenthood. Children understand what it means to be nurtured. They know how to nurture others by ensuring everyone feels welcome and has someone to play with.
- As staff develop the curriculum, they need to ensure children have increased opportunities to understand, promote and celebrate diversity. Children across the school do not yet have a consistent understanding of equality and diversity. They should have a key role in selecting texts which promote diversity. Teachers need to increase access for children to reading material about different religions and cultures. They should continue to support children to learn about the wider set of protected characteristics. This will help them to expand their understanding of equality and diversity, and wider society beyond their local community.

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

- At the time of the inspection, the school roll comprised of a small number of children. Overall statements have been made about attainment and progress to ensure individual children are not identified.
- Overall, attainment across the school in literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics is satisfactory. In June 2023, the school's CfE data shows that the majority of children achieved appropriate levels in reading, listening and talking and numeracy. Less than half achieved nationally expected levels in writing. A few children exceed expected CfE levels. A few children could achieve more.
- Most children who face barriers to learning are making satisfactory progress towards meeting their individual targets.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, children are making satisfactory progress in literacy and English. As a result of actions taken to improve the quality of writing this session, there are early indications that children's progress is improving.

Listening and talking

- At early level, most children listen well and engage well in conversation with adults and peers during learning. At first level, most children communicate clearly and audibly, taking turns appropriately during class discussions and when working with a partner. A few children require adult support to listen to the ideas of others. Children at second level build on the opinions and views of others during paired and group work. They show respect for others and offer their own viewpoints. A few feel less confident speaking in front of larger groups. Children should develop further their confidence when speaking in front of an audience.

Reading

- At early level, most children recognise the majority of initial sounds. A few children are capable of acquiring new phonics and words at a quicker pace. Most children use pictorial clues to retell familiar stories and predict what might happen next. At first level, most children read fluently and are developing their use of expression. Most children explain their choice of favourite books. At second level, most children explain their choice of text and read aloud with fluency and appropriate expression to demonstrate understanding. Children at first and second level need to develop further their higher-order reading skills.

Writing

- The majority of children at early level form lower case letters and some upper-case letters legibly. They are developing their skills in writing a sentence with a capital letter and a full stop.

Children would benefit from more regular opportunities to write independently, including through play. The majority of children at first level write with increasing independence, punctuating most sentences accurately. They should continue to add greater detail in extended writing. The majority of children at second level use appropriate vocabulary in their writing to suit their purpose and audience. They show an enjoyment for creating poems. Children at first and second level are not able to discuss confidently the differing features of writing genres. They would benefit from having more frequent opportunities to develop their writing skills at a level appropriate to their ability. Children's work is not always marked, and feedback is inconsistent. This is limiting the progress children make with their writing.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, children are making satisfactory progress in numeracy and mathematics. Staff should review pedagogy in numeracy to provide lessons and activities that are well-matched to all children's needs. The headteacher should support teachers to develop a clearer understanding of gaps in children's understanding of concepts. Teachers should continue to develop children's application of skills across mathematical contexts.

Number, money and measure

- At early level, most children sequence numbers to 20 and identify the number before and after within 20. A few children work with numbers beyond 20. At early level, a majority of children add and subtract confidently within 10. A few require support to correctly form numbers. Most children link time to daily events accurately. At first level, most children identify the place value of four-digit numbers and add on and subtract from these. There are gaps in children's understanding of units of measure. At second level, most children have an appropriate understanding of place value and convert fractions into percentages. They use 24-hour notation with increasing accuracy. Most children need support to calculate change and profit when solving money problems. At first and second level, most children should continue to develop their ability to apply their knowledge of number processes to real-life contexts.

Shape, position and movement

- At early level, the majority of children identify basic two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects. At first level, most children identify common three-dimensional objects. They do not yet use mathematical language confidently to describe the properties of three-dimensional objects. At second level, most children use mathematical language well to describe and classify different angles.

Information handling

- At early level, most children sort items accurately based on set criteria, such as size and colour. At first and second level, children record information using tally marks and bar graphs. Across the school, children would benefit from additional opportunities to collect, organise, analyse and display real-life data in a variety of ways.

Attainment over time

- The headteacher acknowledges the variation in levels of attainment in recent years. They have established appropriate processes to make more robust use of evidence to monitor children's progress in learning. These include regular professional dialogue with class teachers and the support for learning worker. This approach is at an early stage of development. The headteacher and teachers need to continue to develop approaches to gathering data that will accurately illustrate attainment over time for all children.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Children's achievements in and out of school are recognised and celebrated in weekly assemblies, newsletters, Kyle Chronicle, and the 'Amazing Achievers' display. This includes

recognising when they demonstrate the school values successfully. This is building children's confidence and motivation.

- At the upper stages, children are beginning to progress their leadership skills and build their self-esteem through initiatives such as playground leaders and digital leaders. Staff intend to relaunch the pupil council and eco committee for all children. The headteacher acknowledges that it will be important for these groups to start more promptly in a school session to ensure that children gain maximum benefit from the experience.
- The headteacher has introduced approaches to monitor children's wider achievements. They need to track children's participation and achievements more closely to ensure no child misses out. This should also provide an effective basis on which to plan progression in skills development. The headteacher has correctly identified the need for children to profile their achievements and record the skills and attributes they are developing. This will support their understanding of themselves as learners.

Equity for all learners

- Staff know their children and families very well. They understand the socio-economic context of the rural community and ensure equity for all. They take steps to reduce the cost of the school day. This includes supporting P7 children to attend a residential outing and providing school uniform. Local community groups including the local Church and Kyle of Sutherland Development Trust support the school very generously. They support families in a range of practical ways, such as providing food vouchers, baking kits and Christmas gifts.
- The school is in receipt of PEF. Additional pupil support assistant time is providing targeted and universal support in literacy and numeracy for children. This is beginning to have a positive impact on attainment in literacy and numeracy, particularly in spelling. Staff now need to monitor the impact of interventions on outcomes for children more closely. This will help ensure they can demonstrate they are accelerating progress towards closing the poverty related attainment gap.

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.