

Summarised inspection findings

Kilninver Primary School

Argyll and Bute Council

19 March 2024

Key contextual information

Kilninver Primary School serves a wide rural area to the south of Oban. The school roll at the time of the inspection was 24. Children are taught in two multi-stage classes, P1 to P4 and P6 to P7. This session there are no children in P5. The headteacher has been in post since April 2021, becoming the permanent post-holder in April 2022. She has overall responsibility for the Pre-Five Unit which is part of Kilninver Primary School. She is also the headteacher of Arinagour Primary School on the Isle of Coll and is there three days every fortnight.

Since joining the school, the headteacher has had the significant challenge of substantial staff changes and absences. Continual turnover of teachers remains a constant, the most recent change being at the beginning of January 2024. The headteacher has had several periods of time providing absence cover in class.

The school is not part of a settlement and almost all children are brought to school by car or school transport. The majority of children come from Kilmelford, seven miles away. They have to be transported to any activity outwith school property.

All children live within Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) deciles 5 to 7. Most children live in SIMD decile 6. There are no children registered for free school meals this session.

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 and staff have established effectively the school expectations of 'be safe, be kind and be ready'. All children relate easily to these. The headteacher led a valuable consultation with the school community to establish values that are relevant to everyone. Children, staff and parents are becoming increasingly familiar with the identified values of friendship, ambition and respect. Parents appreciate being involved in this team approach. The headteacher should strengthen this important partnership further by continuing to work in this way. This will be significant when she leads the planned review of the school vision.
- Parents welcomed the permanent appointment of the headteacher in April 2022 as it brought stability to this role and the school community. Overall, most parents are satisfied with the school although they are concerned about frequent teaching staff changes in recent years. Since her appointment, the headteacher has had several periods of time with a part-time teaching commitment. These factors impact significantly on the capacity for improvement and pace of change.
- The headteacher is involving children, parents and staff more in identifying strengths and areas for improvement. Staff in place work well together as a team. They talk about a shared responsibility for school improvement. The headteacher strives to make the best use of staff's skills and interests available at the time. Across the team, staff reflect together regularly on

practice with a focus on ensuring the best outcomes for children. The headteacher should take a more formal approach to developing practice by introducing more robust approaches to self-evaluation. She should develop further teachers' knowledge and understanding of 'How good is our school? 4th Edition'. This will help them identify accurately priorities for improvement and increase their understanding of the relationship between self-evaluation and school improvement. It will help them recognise where there is a need for change and their individual responsibilities to lead and support developments. The team should identify priorities for improvement through effective, evidence-based self-evaluation.

- All children are organised into one of four clans, each clan led by elected clan leaders. They speak positively about their sense of belonging as a result of this. They enjoy regular opportunities to work together with children across the stages and build positive relationships. Children enjoy leadership roles within this context and have useful opportunities to influence change and improvement across the school in meaningful ways. In their clans, they have focused on having a voice and being able to influence changes. Through the clan system, all children are involved currently in identifying improvements to the school's outdoor environment. Parents and children value this approach highly and are keen for it to be developed further.
- The headteacher has planned a full calendar of activities to check the quality of the school's work across the year. Her capacity to fulfil this has been limited by staffing constraints. She should look at ways of making approaches to this important aspect of the school's work more manageable. She should consider combining activities creatively to generate necessary evidence of strengths and areas for development. She should ensure that quality assurance activities have a clear focus and are used effectively to inform school improvement.
- The school benefits from an active Parent Council who are keen to support the school, which they do through fundraising. The headteacher discusses school improvement priorities with them and shares plans for Pupil Equity Funding (PEF). Parents would like more opportunities to use their skills and talents to benefit the school community. An important next step is for the headteacher to build on recent developments to increase further children's and parents' role in effecting meaningful change.
- It would be beneficial for the headteacher to work with all staff to review remits. She should carry this out as part of the professional review and development process. This would help identify opportunities for leadership roles across the school community. In turn, this would also help improve the pace and effectiveness of change. The headteacher should support staff to connect professional learning with improvement priorities to increase further the capacity for change.

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 school's ethos is positive and nurturing. This leads to a calm and supportive learning environment for all children. Children throughout the school are articulate and well-mannered. They are considerate of one another and of visitors to the school. Mutual respect is a key feature of the relationships between children and staff. Almost all children are motivated and engage well during learning. Almost all parents feel staff know their children well as individuals and help them to develop as confident learners. Children are beginning to make connections between the school values and children's rights. Children are aware increasingly of the importance of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Older children talk confidently about the focus on children's rights during assembly and their relevance to school life. Staff are taking forward a rights-based approach, working towards further external accreditation.
- Across the school, almost all children work well independently. Most children work well in pairs and small groups when given the opportunity to do so. Teachers should ensure they provide all children with appropriately challenging and enjoyable experiences within multi-stage classes. While the majority of learning activities meet children's needs, teachers should increase the pace and challenge of learning to support children to achieve more. Most children would like their work to be more challenging more often.
- In most lessons, teachers' explanations and instructions are clear. They share the purpose of learning with children and how to be successful. Staff should support children to reflect on how well they are doing by using identified measures of success more often and more consistently. They should use these measures more to talk to children about their success and to shape oral and written feedback. Staff should work together to agree a consistent approach to providing feedback that will help children recognise their strengths and next steps. Staff should support children to talk about their progress more regularly. Teachers ask questions to check children's understanding. In a few lessons, they use questions effectively to extend children's thinking.
- The headteacher should work with staff, children and parents to agree what high-quality learning and teaching looks like at Kilninver Primary School. They should agree core expectations for all lessons to ensure increasing consistency in the quality of children's experiences. The headteacher should share this with all teachers who come to work with children.
- Children at the early years are not yet benefiting from learning that is developmentally appropriate, such as play-based learning. The headteacher and teachers should work together to plan appropriate spaces, resources and learning through play that offers continuity and progression across the early level. They should seek opportunities to work with early years colleagues on this development. The headteacher and teachers should engage with national

practice guidance and professional learning to develop their understanding of the close relationship between play and learning.

- Teachers use standardised assessments, summative assessments, and knowledge of individual children to check children's progress in literacy and numeracy. The headteacher has found confidence using standardised assessments. With the high turnover of teachers, she has relied on standardised assessments to support teachers' professional judgements. She recognises that teachers need relevant and robust assessment information to plan appropriate next steps in learning effectively for all children. Pupil profiles have early examples of effective high-quality assessments. Planned high-quality assessments should give children opportunities to apply skills in unfamiliar situations and allow teachers to assess how secure children's learning is. They should show the depth of children's understanding and ability to apply learning in new contexts and across the curriculum. This would provide more robust evidence to enrich the quality of assessment information which teachers use to make judgements about children's progress.
- Teachers have regular, informal discussions to reflect on their practice and understanding of national standards. They support each other to develop their practice. The headteacher has reintroduced professional learning and collaboration with colleagues from cluster schools. Teachers are becoming more confident and accurate in making robust professional judgements about children's achievement of a level. The headteacher should continue with plans to develop further teachers' shared understanding of national standards within Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels. She should provide more planned opportunities for moderation within and out with the school. The headteacher should continue to work with teachers to improve approaches to assessment further to ensure consistency.
- Teachers plan learning for children across all curricular areas and over different timescales using the CfE experiences and outcomes. Children are not yet involved in planning learning. The headteacher and teachers should agree consistent expectations of planning. This should include showing clearly how they plan to meet the needs of all children so that they make appropriate progress.
- The headteacher meets with teachers three times a year to discuss children's progress. She should use the meetings more effectively to track children's progress rigorously, including those affected by barriers to learning. She should use all the information gathered to support and challenge teachers' understanding of progress and national standards. Together they should identify what support children need to make the best possible progress, and plan appropriate interventions. The headteacher should provide teachers with a written record of discussions. This feedback should detail clear actions, timescales for review and evaluations of the impact of interventions on overall attainment.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- The headteacher has put in place progressive learning pathways across all curriculum areas. Teachers use CfE experiences and outcomes to plan curricular areas through learning which uses links across different subjects. The headteacher should work with staff to review learning pathways and how effectively teachers use them to support children's progress. They should ensure that all learning builds on children's prior knowledge and skills and that there are no gaps in learning.
- During session 2022/2023, staff reviewed the health and wellbeing learning pathway to address identified gaps. The revised pathway supports progression and continuity in health and wellbeing more effectively. Children are developing skills and understanding in mental health, positive relationships, the importance of physical exercise and healthy eating, as a result.
- The headteacher plans to review the principles of the curriculum to reflect the refreshed school vision, the UNCRC, and the unique context of the school. Parents are keen to support this work and share their skills and talents. COVID-19 impacted negatively on partnership working. The headteacher and staff should re-establish and create new links with local businesses and partners. This would enhance the curriculum and make it more relevant to children.
- The headteacher strives to ensure that each week all children have access to the entitlement of two hours quality physical education (PE). She has arrangements in place for children to be transported once a week to Kilmore Hall for PE. There is no available indoor space in the school. Whenever possible, teachers take children outdoors for PE.
- As a result of constant staff changes, it has been challenging for the headteacher to provide children with learning in other languages. Recently, teachers have introduced all children to learning Gaelic. Older children access this learning effectively through e-Sgoil. Older children talk about learning French occasionally. Staffing constraints mean that the approach to 1+2 languages is inconsistent.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- School staff use an online platform, emails, and newsletters to share key information with parents. Parents would welcome greater consistency in approaches used and the frequency of information provided across the school. Parents are very interested in their children's learning and progress. They welcome access to assessment information and contact with their child's class teacher to discuss learning and progress in depth. They would like this to be enhanced further by a written report about their child's learning.
- Parents are keen to support the work of the school. They would like to develop innovative ways of working in partnership with staff to extend opportunities available to children. They are particularly keen to strengthen further approaches to outdoor learning. The headteacher, with staff, should harness this enthusiasm and commitment to strengthen the home-school partnership.

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

- Kilninver Primary School has a warm and inclusive ethos where everybody is welcome. Staff provide a safe and nurturing environment where all children feel valued. Staff's positive relationships and interactions with children result in a supportive culture where children feel confident and safe. Children are considerate of each other. The respectful relationships which are evident across the school, are increasingly based on children's rights and school values.
- Staff support children regularly to reflect on their wellbeing. This includes meeting individual children twice a year for one-to-one discussions. Children talk confidently about the wellbeing indicators and use them effectively to assess their health and wellbeing. Children have a clear understanding of wellbeing as a result. Since returning to learn in school after periods of remote learning, teachers have given children time daily to reflect on their emotions. This has helped reduce children's levels of anxiety. Children talk about their emotions easily and how they can impact on their wellbeing. The headteacher should now review this approach to ensure that time is used most effectively to meet children's current needs.
- Children understand what it means to be active, healthy and safe and the difference this will make to their lives beyond school. They are clear about the ways that adults in school help them to achieve a positive sense of wellbeing. They know they have an adult they can speak to if they are upset or worried about something. Children recognise ways they support each other across the school, for example, older children reading regularly with younger children.
- Children and parents at Kilninver Primary School value learning outdoors as an important part of the school's identity. All children visit a woodland area several miles away regularly during terms one and four. They engage in activities including fire-making and den-building. Children are knowledgeable about how to stay safe when outdoors and know how to assess and manage the risk of activities. Parents recognise that children become more resilient and able to work well with others as a result of learning outdoors. They would like there to be an increased focus on outdoor learning.
- The headteacher is involving all children in reviewing the outdoor environment around the school. Staff identify that the limited space could be organised better to support learning outdoors. Children are at the early stages of working together to prioritise meaningful changes. They know that adults listen to their views and take them into account. Children are beginning to feel more included, responsible and empowered to make genuine changes.
- All staff are developing knowledge and awareness of legislation and statutory duties relating to wellbeing, equality and inclusion with the support of the local authority. The headteacher monitors attendance routinely and regularly. She supports children well to attend school. She has open channels of communication with families and as a result identifies any concerns

early. School attendance is above the local and national average. All staff receive annual training in child protection and safeguarding. The headteacher should ensure that staff joining the team during the year receive up-to-date training.

- A few children who require additional support for learning have an individual support plan in place. Teachers outline children's additional needs and strategies planned to support them overcome barriers to learning. They set targets for children which these plans reflect. Teachers are beginning to ensure that all short-term targets are measurable, achievable, and realistic. The headteacher needs to ensure that staff review children's progress against achieving targets as planned. This will help them to measure children's progress more clearly and set appropriate next steps for their learning. The headteacher should ensure that parents and children are now involved fully in the process. She should encourage them to share their views and be involved actively in reviewing children's progress. This will also support children's and parents' understanding of targets and provide clearer information for teachers on the precise steps to take and strategies to use. The headteacher should ensure that the impact of additional support is checked and reviewed regularly so that children make the most effective progress. She should also ensure she is making the most effective use of staff available.
- The headteacher has a well-planned assembly programme in place. Children talk about how this helps them to understand and respect other people. As staff continue to develop children's understanding of wellbeing, equality, and inclusion, they should support children to develop a better understanding of equalities. Children need more chances to learn about equal opportunities across the curriculum and in a progressive way. This should help children understand the importance of celebrating diversity and difference, and challenging discrimination. It will help them develop appreciation of the importance of equality and fairness in society.

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 number of children at each stage is relatively small and varies each session. There are no P5 children currently. Overall statements about attainment and progress, rather than for specific year groups or levels, are made to ensure that no child is identified.
- Overall, attainment in literacy and numeracy across the school is satisfactory. The majority of children are on track to achieve national standards in literacy and numeracy. A significant minority of children is capable of achieving more in their learning. Overall, most children, including those who need support with their learning, are making satisfactory progress in literacy and numeracy.

Attainment in literacy and English

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

Listening and talking

- Most children are making good progress in listening and talking. Across the school, most children listen very well to staff and each other in teacher-led activities and group tasks. Almost all children follow instructions well. They take turns to talk and listen to each other during learning activities. Younger children express ideas and show their understanding by answering questions. A few younger children need to be encouraged to take their turn to share their thoughts. Most older children contribute ideas confidently. They listen carefully, recount experiences and build on the ideas of peers well. They would like more opportunities to present their work to a variety of audiences. Children recognise this would help to develop further their listening and talking skills.

Reading

- The majority of younger children recognise initial letters and letter sounds. They are becoming more confident using their skills to try to read simple common words. Most children read well with fluency and expression, appropriate to their age and stage. They use a range of appropriate strategies to help them read new and unfamiliar words. The majority of older children offer a personal preference for authors and the type of books they enjoy. As children move through the school, they explain clearly how the author, cover or title influence their choice of books when reading for enjoyment. They are less confident explaining techniques authors use to influence the reader or explaining key features of an author's use of language to engage the reader.

Writing

- Children are not making sufficient progress in writing. Children at the early stages need more support to develop further their phonic development to improve their writing and spelling. Children across the school need more support to form letters correctly and to improve their handwriting skills. All children need time and opportunity to write more often. As children progress through the school, they should be writing short and extended texts for a range of purposes and audiences more regularly. This includes greater application of writing in real-life contexts.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, most children make satisfactory progress in numeracy and mathematics. Almost all children are capable of learning at a faster pace in order to make better progress.

Number, money and measure

- Younger children identify, recognise and order numbers up to 10. They use one-to-one correspondence with growing confidence to count a given number of objects. Older children show increasing mental agility appropriate for their age, and carry out calculations with growing accuracy. When adding and multiplying, they choose different strategies and justify their choice well. Older children apply their understanding of multiplication effectively to calculate the area of squares, rectangles and right-angled triangles. Across the school, children would benefit from more regular practice applying their numeracy skills to real-life, relevant and meaningful contexts.

Shape, position and movement

- Children name and discuss features of two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects successfully, appropriate to their stage of learning. Younger children understand and use the language of position, including in front, behind, forwards and backwards. They are not yet able to identify left and right. Older children need to develop a more confident understanding of angle as appropriate to their stage.

Information handling

- Younger children interpret simple block graphs well. As they move through school, they display information gathered in block graphs. Older children calculate the range, the median and the mode which is beyond their expected level. All children would benefit from learning more regularly about information handling skills.

Attainment over time

- The small school roll and numbers of children at each stage mean that any trends in attainment data overtime are unreliable. Year on year, attainment data fluctuates due to ongoing changes in the school roll and the number of children at each stage.
- The headteacher and teachers use the local authority tracking system to record children's progress in literacy and numeracy. In addition, the headteacher has introduced recently an overview of individual children's attainment over time. This focus on individual children's progress is important given the small numbers. As the headteacher is at the early stages of using this helpful information, it is not yet having an impact on raising attainment. She should ensure she uses this information sufficiently well to raise attainment over time by interrogating this information regularly and rigorously with teachers. Together they should develop approaches to evidence children's progress over time more effectively. This will help them identify gaps in learning, plan interventions to address gaps and monitor the impact these have on overall attainment.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- The school celebrates children's achievements from school and from home regularly at assembly by awarding them 'praise postcards'. Children enjoy sharing their successes with their families in this way. Older children also use an online platform to share their achievements more widely.
- Children are beginning to influence the life of the school in meaningful ways. The headteacher is developing the clan system further as a valuable context for all children to share their ideas and thoughts. Children recognise that by being involved, they are learning how to work with others and develop leadership and presentation skills. Children identify that these skills will help them in the workplace to relate to other people, listen and work well in teams. Recently appointed digital leaders are looking forward to supporting others across the school. They are proud that their confidence and skill in digital technologies has been recognised in this way.
- Staff should now develop a system to track children's wider achievements. This will enable them to identify children who may be missing out. Working with children, they should identify and track the skills children develop. This should help children to make links between their achievements, learning and progress.

Equity for all learners

- All staff know children and families well. Staff and parents are aware of the impact of the pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis on economic circumstances. They are keen that no child misses out due to financial hardship. They understand the unique challenges of the location of the school and work hard to provide an inclusive ethos that promotes equity. Parent Council fundraising supports the cost of transport to activities out with school for all children. There is no cost to the school day for families.
- The headteacher uses PEF to provide universal support for children's wellbeing. The funding pays for transport which allows all children to access woodland learning. Children and parents share how much they value these outdoor learning experiences and would like them to happen more often. The headteacher should now focus on monitoring the impact of this approach on children's wellbeing and the extent that this is helping to raise attainment.

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.