

Summarised inspection findings

Chapel of Garioch School

Aberdeenshire Council

25 June 2019

Key contextual information

The school serves the village of Chapel of Garioch and the surrounding areas of Balquhain and Braco. At the time of inspection, the school roll was 32, with two multi-composite classes (P1-3 and P4-7). The headteacher has a 0.5 teaching commitment. She is supported by a part-time teacher and a full-time teacher.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

very good

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

- Chapel of Garioch School is a nurturing and caring place for children to learn. The health and wellbeing of children underpins the life and work of the school. This results in a safe, positive and engaging learning environment for all children. Relationships between children and staff are very positive. This is an important strength of the school. As a result, all children are motivated to learn and enjoy learning together in the close, family atmosphere.
- Across the school, staff create positive and motivating environments for learning. This is based on the long-established values of respect, collaboration, achievement and resilience. Children respond routinely as polite, well-mannered and eager learners. In recent years, the headteacher has led effectively a process to reflect on the uniqueness of the school in order to develop a dynamic and ambitious curriculum rationale. There are appropriate plans in place to revisit and review the school's vision, values and aims, involving staff, children, parents and the range of community partners. This will support the school to develop a shared understanding of its future direction which remains meaningful and relevant to its context.
- In both multi-stage composite classes, children enjoy and feel challenged in their learning. They benefit from having elements of choice about what they are learning, particularly when planning new topics or individual research projects. Teachers encourage successfully children to develop independence and direct their own learning. Children evaluate regularly their own learning and participate in appropriate peer assessment activities. Learning conversations take place on a regular basis, allowing children to reflect on, and to take responsibility for their learning. They receive high-quality feedback from teachers and celebrate successes. The use of e-portfolios, created by children in a bespoke and highly personalised way, allows them to reflect on their learning and identify their own strengths and next steps.
- Children feel consulted about their school experiences. Staff seek children's views in a range of ways, for example through pupil committees and by using suggestion boxes. As a result, children take the lead in organising and improving aspects of school life. The pupil council organised recently a well-attended movie night to raise funds for the school. The rights respecting school committee arranged a sponsored reading challenge which helped to buy

books for children in hospital. More widely, children recently were consulted on how to spend some additional school funds. They chose to improve the playground facilities for team sports, such as football. As planned, staff should continue to build on approaches to learner participation by providing opportunities for children to reflect collectively on the quality of their learning experiences. For example, by using the prompts from 'How good is OUR school?' to identify what is working well, and any aspects for further improvement.

- Overall, the quality of teaching within the school is very good. All lessons and activities are well planned. Teachers share the purpose of lessons routinely with children. Children are often involved in co-constructing success criteria along with their teachers. Teachers plan together to differentiate lessons and activities, ensuring learning is well matched overall to the individual needs of children. Teachers' planning allows flexible groupings to provide additional support for children, as and when required. During lessons, children have an appropriate balance of well-planned opportunities to work individually and in groups. Teachers deploy support staff very effectively. They play an important role to allow flexibility in learning across the differing stages within the class. This helps to ensure learning is accessible and meaningful for all children. Almost all children understand the relevance and purpose of their learning and link this meaningfully to their prior learning. At all stages of the school, children independently organise aspects of their learning with minimal adult input.
- Outdoor learning is a strength of the school and features strongly in the curriculum rationale. Staff make good use particularly of the attractive school grounds, local community and nearby woodland area to provide children with exciting contexts to learn across the curriculum. Very well planned and relevant activities outdoors result in all children being motivated and fully engaged in their learning. They demonstrate creativity and imagination as they conduct science experiments and create special areas for animals and birds in their garden. Valuable, long-standing partnerships with local community groups, businesses and the Forestry Commission, greatly enhance children's experiences outdoors. This is helping them to develop a strong sense of environmental stewardship. These partnerships also provide children with opportunities to develop an understanding of different careers and the world of work.
- Children make very good use of digital technology to support and enhance their learning. Every child has their own tablet, which they use confidently to take photographs and to produce videos to capture their learning. They document their own learning journeys on the tablets and share their learning and achievements with their families at home. Older children also use laptops independently to word process their stories. They have created their own interesting animations to showcase various aspects of their learning.
- The outward-looking headteacher and staff make the most of opportunities to share good practice with other local small schools, with whom they have developed close working partnerships. Staff engage in relevant professional learning that focuses on developing aspects of learning, teaching and assessment. Most recently, this has focused on developing strategies to meet the needs of children with autism and anxiety.
- Teachers participate regularly in planned opportunities to engage in moderation activities with other local schools. They use a range of reliable assessment evidence to inform their professional judgements regarding progress within a Curriculum for Excellence level and achievement of a level. This includes the right balance of the use of formative assessment, learning conversations, diagnostic assessments and summative assessments to provide evidence of progress. The school is reviewing currently approaches to assess children's

writing, in order to better reflect their skills across this area. Commendably, the school is developing the use of holistic assessments in real-life contexts to support further teachers' confidence in achievement of a level.

- The headteacher and staff regularly discuss the progress of all children. They analyse the range of assessment evidence available to them, and plan any required interventions to ensure all children are making the best possible progress. Staff use national benchmarks, along with helpful progression pathways from Aberdeenshire Council. This ensures that curriculum programmes, including for literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing, build on children's prior learning as they move through the school. Staff should continue to engage with colleagues in the secondary school to develop an understanding of what learning looks like beyond second level in key curricular areas. This will help them to develop further challenge for those children who are exploring aspects of third level in their learning, whilst ensuring appropriate pace and challenge as they continue their learning into S1.

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

very good

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

Overall attainment in literacy and numeracy

- As each cohort in this school is fewer than ten, statements about overall progress have been made to ensure the anonymity of individual children.
- Across the school, almost all children are making very good progress in listening and talking, reading and numeracy and mathematics. Most children are making very good progress in writing. Staff support children who require additional support with their learning very well to ensure they make the best possible progress. Children who require additional help with learning make strong progress from prior levels. At all stages of the school, a few children are exceeding national expectations for reading and writing, or numeracy and mathematics.

Literacy and English

- Overall, attainment in literacy is very good. Across the school, almost all children are making very good progress in reading and listening and talking. Most are making very good progress in writing. Almost all are on track to achieve or exceed appropriate Curriculum for Excellence levels by the end of the current session. The holistic approach to teaching literacy across the school is having a positive impact on children's attainment. Children effectively make connections across their literacy learning.

Reading

- Overall, children's attainment in reading is very good. Children across the school enjoy reading and make personal choices about what they like to read. Children read across a range of genres. They explain their preferences for particular authors and discuss their reasons why. At the second level, through reciprocal reading approaches, almost all children use effective questioning to deepen each other's understanding of text. Older children enjoy interrogating challenging texts with complex themes, such as adaptations of Shakespeare's plays. Almost all younger children make very good progress developing their skills in phonics, and use this to read new and unfamiliar words. This is empowering children to enjoy and understand a range of reading sources. As they progress in their learning, children develop their understanding and application of a range of literary techniques. For example by the end of first level, all children identify key ideas of a text; skim and scan for specific information; and distinguish between fiction and non-fiction. By the end of second level, almost all children understand and apply techniques such as similes, metaphors and imagery into their own writing, from a range of reading stimuli.

Writing

- Overall, children's attainment in writing is very good. Children write across a range of genres. They thrive on developing ideas together, often stimulated by learning outdoors. Children use their skills to write in real-life contexts. For example, younger children annotated their designs for shelters for woodland animals and birds. All children at the early stages are beginning to apply their skills in the use of basic punctuation in order to structure their writing. By the end of first level, almost all children are developing skills to write more extended pieces of writing. They use varied sentence structures and a range of literary techniques acquired from their personal reading, to engage their audience. Almost all children successfully organise their writing in paragraphs and write across a range of purposes. By the end of second level, almost all children create mature texts for a range of purposes and audiences, selecting appropriate genre. They write at length including writing biographies and their own autobiographies.

Listening and talking

- All children speak to adults, and to each other, confidently and articulately. Most are skilled at taking turns and responding appropriately to prompts and information, especially by the end of first level and into second level. As they progress through the stages, children are developing their ability to listen during class discussions. Almost all offer their opinions and views succinctly and ask pertinent questions. Children give critical feedback to their peers. By the end of first level and into second level, almost all children identify the purpose of spoken texts and respond appropriately. As children progress through the school, they develop their skills in talking to an audience and presenting information. From P1 onwards, children give class talks in order to develop further their confidence in presenting to peers and a variety of audiences. Older children use skills of debating through their topic on the Scottish Parliament. They now need to extend their communication skills further by engaging in their own class debates, forming arguments for and against topical issues.

Numeracy and Mathematics

- Overall, children's attainment in numeracy and mathematics is very good. Almost all children are making very good progress. Almost all are on track to achieve or exceed appropriate Curriculum for Excellence levels by the end of the current session. Across the school, children apply their numeracy and mathematics skills in real-life contexts. This is having a positive impact on children's attainment.

Number money and measurement

- At the early stages, all children demonstrate a very good understanding of number. They estimate and check different durations of time in context and relate different times of the day to important events in their lives. All children recognise coins up to £2. By the end of first level, all children describe a range of strategies for mental calculations and apply these to multi step problems. They record measurements using appropriate units and compare and order the sizes of simple fractions. By the end of second level, most children apply the correct order of operations in number calculations when solving multi-step problems. Most can discuss confidently the different strategies they use. They describe clearly links between common fractions, decimal fractions and percentages and express different fractions in their simplest form. Most children calculate the area of different 2D shapes using the correct notation and create scale drawings of the school playground choosing the appropriate scale.

Shape position and movement

- At the early stages, all children identify and describe the features of 2D shapes and 3D objects. By the end of first level, all children identify lines of symmetry in a range of 2D shapes and identify right angles in the environment. By the end of second level, most children use appropriate mathematical language to describe and classify a range of angles. They describe 2D shapes and 3D objects using specific vocabulary.

Information handling

- At the early stages, children use their skills in information handling to create a bar graph showing the different types of housing in the village. By the end of first level, all children use a variety of methods to display data using appropriate scale and labelling. By the end of second level, most children identify the most effective way of collecting data based on the task. They analyse, interpret and draw conclusions from a range of different data sources.

Attainment over time

- Overall, almost all children are making very good progress over time in both literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics. Teachers use a range of formal, informal and standardised assessments to support their professional judgements. Engagement in moderation activities with their partner school is developing the confidence of staff in assessing children's progress. As planned, teachers should continue to work collaboratively with colleagues in other schools to develop their understanding of standards. This will support teachers to continue to improve their confidence in relation to their professional judgements.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- All children participate and achieve in a variety of clubs and activities. This includes residential activities and accredited programmes, such as the John Muir Award. Children's achievements within and outwith school are carefully recorded and tracked. Staff take action to ensure that no child misses out. Children celebrate wider achievement through assemblies, the achievement wall and through the children's e-portfolios. Children make links between their wider learning and skills for learning, life and work. Almost all children confidently describe how these different skills link to the other aspects of their lives and their learning.
- Children are developing the four capacities of Curriculum for Excellence through a range of leadership opportunities. All children engage well in pupil leadership groups focusing on rights respecting schools, digital technology and the pupil council. The rights respecting group identified ways to develop the school community's understanding of children's rights. Children leading on digital technology raised awareness of the importance of internet safety across the school. The pupil council created a healthy eating survey which they used to help support children to make healthier choices for snacks. As a result, almost all children feel their views are taken into account.

Equity for all learners

- All staff know individual children and their families very well. They demonstrate a clear understanding of the socio economic background of all children and seek to provide appropriate supports to address individual children's needs. They know the community well and respond quickly to ensure equity for all. The headteacher uses the Pupil Equity Fund to support a range of needs across the school, linking closely to the priorities for improvement. Teaching materials to support both dyslexia and autism have been introduced. This helps to ensure children's needs are effectively met which is leading to improvements in attainment for identified children.

Practice worth sharing more widely

The successful approaches to teaching literacy through a very well-considered, systematic, co-ordinated and holistic programme. This is driven by high quality learning experiences, rather than by resource. Children at all stages benefit from learning complementary skills in reading, writing, listening and talking linked to different genre, in blocks of time within a yearly plan. This affords children the opportunity to explore, practice and master core literacy skills in relevant, motivating and often real-life contexts.

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.