Summarised inspection findings

Bell's Brae Primary School

Shetland Islands Council

26 September 2023

Key contextual information

Bell's Brae Primary School, a non-denominational school, is the largest primary school in The Shetland Isles, and is situated in the centre of Lerwick.

At the time of inspection, the school roll was 352. This includes 45 children in the early learning and childcare (ELC) setting. Placing requests account for 21% of learners. There is also an Additional Support Needs (ASN) Department, catering for children with a wide range of additional support needs in the school.

The senior leadership team consists of a headteacher and three depute headteachers. There have been some changes in the leadership team over the last few years. The headteacher and depute headteacher for inclusion were both on secondment for a period of time, returning in 2021. The depute headteacher with responsibility for ELC has been in post since January 2022.

Over the past two years, the level of staffing absence and the lack of supply cover has presented many challenges. COVID-19 has had a significant impact on the emotional wellbeing and resilience of the school community, with school staff focusing on meeting this need.

Children have experienced recent disruption to learning due to several school closures days arising from a variety of reasons, including severe weather.

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	

■ Led well by the headteacher, staff and children have created an inclusive and caring ethos across the school. The motto 'We achieve, we are happy' is clearly evident in children's behaviour across the school. All children behave very well and there is a calm and positive climate for learning in classrooms.

■ In most classes, children are eager and enthusiastic about their learning. A minority of children can talk about their skills as a learner. The eight school values are displayed widely and depicted as cartoon characters. There is potential to simplify the values to enable children to use them to support relationships. All children behave very well and there is a calm and positive climate for learning in classrooms.

■ Most teachers share the purpose of learning and a few explain success criteria with children. Teachers should continue to develop children's understanding of the purpose of lessons. Almost all lessons are teacher led and are delivered to the whole class. Children now need to be more active in leading aspects of their own learning. A minority of children are not sure if their views are sought or acted upon. During whole class lessons, the pace and challenge of planned learning is not yet effective enough to meet the needs of all children and a minority become disengaged. Teachers need to ensure that lesson starters, explanations and

introductions are directed at meeting all needs. This would help to increase children's levels of motivation and engagement in learning.

■ A few children feel that class work does not challenge them enough. Teachers should work together to develop a more differentiated approach to ensure learning is appropriate to meet the needs of all children. Teachers now need to plan specific targets with each child, to make sure they understand their strengths and next steps. Children need to have a better understanding of their progress as learners, as well as the skills they are developing across all areas of the curriculum.

■ Senior leaders and staff should continue to work on a more consistent approach to teaching and learning. Staff have created a visual diagram to help support their understanding of high-quality learning and teaching. This now needs to be clarified to ensure all staff have a shared understanding of these expectations. In a few lessons, children experience active and stimulating learning. Staff should use the context of the school to develop creative and enriching approaches to learning. Teachers need to build opportunities for learning outdoors to enrich the opportunities for children. Children should be involved in making suggestions related to how this might happen within their unique context. This would support greater breadth and application of learning across the curriculum. Children in early level would benefit from increased opportunities to learn through play. Teachers should work with nursery practitioners to build play activities into curriculum planning.

■ Children use a few digital approaches to support learning. For example, the use of a digital profile is beginning to enable children to record their skills. Staff should continue to develop children's understanding of the skills they use in digital learning. Digital approaches could be developed by children's ideas to ensure they remain motivated and learn at the appropriate pace. Staff should continue to further develop digital technology across the school in a planned and progressive way

■ Teachers create stimulating learning environments. Displays are well presented and sometimes used by children to support learning. Children are proud of their achievements on display. A few teachers use questioning in a skilled way to motivate and develop curiosity in children. Support staff work extensively across the school with children who require additional support. This enables children to continue to learn with peers and supports the strongly inclusive approach, which is a strength of the school.

■ Teachers provide feedback of varied quality to support children's learning and understanding. Teachers should ensure they support children's understanding of their progress by providing well timed feedback. Children would benefit from having a greater understanding of their individual progress. They should be involved in drafting and tracking their own learning targets.

■ Teachers plan assessments as part of teaching and learning. A minority use a variety of approaches including self- and peer-assessment to support children. Staff gather summative assessment data to support their conversations about interventions and next steps. Teachers moderate children's work across the stages. This is usually with stage partners and senior leaders. A next step would be to plan moderation with external colleagues, specifically those across the learning community. This would support teachers' more robust judgement of levels of attainment and enable them to plan clearer intervention strategies to help children in learning.

■ Senior leaders have meetings with teachers three times per year to discuss children's progress, with a focus on children who are not on track. As a result, interventions are identified to support individual children in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing.

■ Staff should ensure children receive their entitlement to Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) across all eight curriculum areas. Teachers need to develop plans for all areas of the curriculum to support progression for all learners.

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.

3.2 Raising attainment and achievement	**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

Attainment in literacy and numeracy

■ Overall, children's attainment in literacy and English, and numeracy and mathematics is good.

■ Periods of remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic impacted negatively on children's attainment. School data shows that attainment has now returned to pre-pandemic levels for almost all children.

■ Senior leaders are aware that teachers' professional judgements are not consistently accurate across the school. Analysis during the inspection showed that a minority of children were achieving beyond reported levels. Senior leaders and teachers should continue to extend the use of data and moderation to ensure professional judgements are increasingly robust and reliable.

■ At early level, most children are achieving expected CfE levels in reading, writing, listening and talking and numeracy and mathematics. At first level, most children are achieving expected CfE levels in reading, writing and listening and talking. A majority are achieving expected CfE levels in numeracy and mathematics. At second level, most children are achieving expected CfE levels in reading and numeracy and mathematics. A majority are achieving expected CfE levels in writing and almost all are achieving expected CfE levels in listening and talking.

■ Most children with additional support needs are making good progress towards their individual learning targets. A few children at all levels are capable of achieving more in their learning.

Attainment in literacy and English

■ Overall, children are making good progress from prior levels of attainment in literacy and English. Across all levels, a few children should be supported to make better progress in Literacy and English.

Listening and talking

■ At early level, almost all children listen to instructions and respond appropriately in class and group settings. At first and second levels, most children discuss texts and communicate their understanding with confidence. Almost all pupils across the school communicate effectively with other children and staff. Children in a few classes have the opportunity to use suitable vocabulary to present to a wider audience or across a range of contexts. All children should be given more opportunities to apply their learning to different contexts.

Reading

■ At early level, most children blend sounds to create and read simple words. They read simple texts and are applying their skills to sound out new words and use pictures to support reading and understanding. Most children who have achieved first and second level demonstrate a

good understanding of grammar and punctuation. They read aloud with understanding and expression. They discuss key features of texts confidently and as appropriate to their stage. They describe some key features of non-fiction texts accurately. At second level, most children are confident summarising, predicting, clarifying and questioning to support their comprehension of texts. At first and second levels, children would benefit from greater experiences in answering inferential questions regarding texts.

Writing

■ Across the school, children are writing in a range of genres and for a variety of relevant purposes. As they move through the school, they use a wider range of punctuation, vocabulary and structure in their writing. Teachers are developing a consistent approach to planning writing and appropriate time is given to allow children to complete and edit their work. These developing approaches are supporting children to identify their progress and next steps in writing.

■ At early level, most children can form letters correctly. They use common words and known sounds to write simple words and short sentences. At first level, most children write independently for different purposes. They identify confidently features of a few genres, such as imaginative and personal writing. They present their writing legibly and enhance their text with suitable pictures and images. Children attaining second level can confidently organise and present information in a logical format. They also use appropriate vocabulary to suit the purpose and intended audience of their writing.

Numeracy and mathematics

■ Overall, children are making good progress from prior levels of attainment in numeracy and mathematics. Across all levels, a few children should be supported to make better progress in numeracy and mathematics.

Number, money and measure

■ At early level, almost all children count on from 20 and a few count back confidently. Most children are adding and subtracting within 10 and use these skills to work with money. Most children are confident in reading analogue and digital time. At first level, most children have a secure understanding of place value. They solve addition and subtraction problems using a range of strategies. They are confident in calculating fractions of a whole number. At early and first level, children are not yet confident in applying their addition and subtraction strategies to problems involving money. At second level, most children confidently round numbers to the nearest 100,000. They are secure in their understanding of place value to two decimal places. Most children at second level are skilled in money calculations and understand the advantages and disadvantages of credit and debit cards. They would benefit from greater opportunities to solve problems relating to time and durations.

Shape, position and movement

■ At early level, most children confidently name familiar two-dimensional and three-dimensional objects. At first level, most children identify a range of two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects. They are not yet confident in describing the properties of shapes and objects. At second level, most children are confident in discussing the properties of a range of two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects. They match objects to their nets confidently.. Most children describe acute, right, obtuse, and reflex angles accurately. They are less confident in calculating complementary and supplementary angles.

Information handling

■ At early level, almost all children confidently match and sort unfamiliar objects. They display information on pictograms with support. At first level, most children can organise a survey, gather data using tally marks and display data in diagrams. They can analyse data from Venn

diagrams. They need further experience in displaying and analysing data from a wider range of graphs and diagrams. At second level, almost all children are confident at displaying data using a range of data using graphs such as line and bar charts. They can accurately analyse the data to solve real-life problems.

Attainment over time

■ Senior leaders and teachers gather a range of attainment data for individual children in literacy and English, numeracy and mathematics and health and wellbeing over time. They rightly recognise the importance of now using this data to identify specific attainment gaps, especially those related to poverty, English as an additional language, additional support needs and gender. As planned, they should ensure rigour in analysing this data for individuals, groups and cohorts, to identify trends in attainment over time.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

■ Children enjoy when staff recognise and celebrate their achievements regularly in class, at assemblies, on the canteen display and on the school website. Staff track children's participation in clubs and out of school activities. They are proactive in supporting children at risk of missing out. Senior leaders should now track the skills that children develop through these experiences.

■ Children are keen to contribute to the life of the school and the wider community. Staff are at the early stages of re-establishing leadership opportunities for children post-pandemic. Senior leaders should provide increased opportunities to enable all children to participate in leadership roles. This will ensure that all children are given greater opportunities to develop their skills for learning, life and work.

Equity for all learners

■ Senior leaders are aware of the socio-economic context of their school community. They use Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) to enhance staffing and develop approaches to nurture, wellbeing, literacy and numeracy. Planned approaches, interventions and strategies are having a positive impact on children's overall progress in literacy and numeracy. Where applied, nurturing principles and new approaches to wellbeing are supporting children's social and emotional wellbeing.

■ Staff currently provide access to waterproof jackets and trousers for all children and have set up a breakfast club and offer after-school clubs which are free of charge. Senior leaders and staff need to minimise the cost of the school day and to develop a position statement on the school's actions to address inequity. This will highlight their approaches and expectations to ensure all children have equity of experience.

Quality of provision in Special Educational Needs

Children with additional support needs attend the school either as residents within the school catchment area or as a result of a parental placing request. A local authority group assesses each child's individual needs and allocates resources to the school according to children's needs.

The four classes are made up of children with a range of additional support needs.

Learning, teaching and assessment

■ Relationships between all adults and children are positive and caring. Children learn in an environment where they know they are valued. Almost all children are eager to learn and enjoy sharing their successes. Almost all children engage well in their learning. In instances where children become distracted, staff are adept at redirecting children back on task. In most lessons, children's learning is appropriately challenging and meets their needs well. In a few lessons, children take responsibility for choosing resources to support their learning. Staff should build on this to support children to take on roles of responsibility, where appropriate, across the school.

■ The school's values are evident in every lesson. All staff have a good understanding of each child and their individual needs. Staff treat children with high levels of consideration and respect. Teachers adopt a range of effective teaching approaches to promote children's engagement. They use a range of digital technologies, including smartboards, well to enrich children's learning experiences.

■ Teachers' explanations and questions support children well to understand what they are learning and why. Senior leaders should consider how a more consistent approach in each class could support children at points of transition more effectively. Staff use a range of verbal and written feedback appropriately to support children to know when they have been successful.

■ A range of multi- and single-agency assessments help teachers to have a clear understanding of each child's skills, abilities and needs. Assessment evidence is accurate and illustrates each child's knowledge, skills or attributes well. These assessments support teachers to develop each child's highly individualised curriculum. Assessments inform planning effectively, which supports almost all children's learning well, and offers an appropriate level of challenge. Teachers review assessment evidence with senior leaders at regular meetings. Children's progress in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing is tracked and monitored through children's individual targets or an online platform. This supports staff to have a clear overview of each child's individual progress. Teachers should now consider how they gather assessment evidence to support tracking and monitoring of children's progress across all curricular areas.

■ Planning for each child is highly individualised. This supports all children to experience learning designed specifically for their needs. Teachers review their planning regularly, taking good account of each child's age, additional support needs, interests and abilities. Parents play a significant role in providing information included in each child's pupil profile. This provides teachers with valuable information regarding each child's individual challenges and interests. Teachers use this information well to plan activities, which meet children's needs and support them to make progress in their learning. Teachers should consider how their approaches to tracking and monitoring could be developed further to support evidence of the impact of PEF on the attainment of those most affected by poverty.

Raising attainment and achievement

■ Children are working across a range of levels from pre-early to second level. The small numbers of children working at each level means that teachers' assessment of achievement of a level relies heavily on each individual child's progress. Children's progress is often measured against their individual targets in their individual education programme. Attainment data that teachers gather for groups of children offers little meaningful information to inform improvement. From reviewing individual children's work, progress in lessons, assessment data it is evident most children are making good progress in their literacy and communication, and numeracy skills.

■ Teachers' well-developed understanding of each child helps them to plan learning at an appropriate level for each child. They use assessments appropriately to support tracking and monitoring of children's progress over time. Teachers have a good understanding of national standards, which supports them well to make accurate professional judgements. This results in children making good progress, building on their prior learning. Teachers should now consider how a wider range of data can be gathered and analysed to evidence children's progress across all curricular areas.

■ Children are developing their confidence and movement skills in a range of activities and clubs. These include taking part in school plays, playing chess with their peers in mainstream classes and sporting activities, such as swimming. Children's achievements are celebrated in displays in classrooms, around the school and at school assemblies. Senior leaders should now develop how they track and monitor the skills and abilities children are developing through their personal achievements.

■ Highly-inclusive practice across the school supports all children, including those with additional support needs, to feel included fully in the life of the school. Planned opportunities for inclusion mean all children access appropriate learning and support in both the additional support needs classes and the wider school. This promotes equity and supports all children to have a strong sense of belonging at the school. Senior leaders should consider how to evaluate the impact of PEF in supporting children in the ASN unit to make improved progress.

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.