

Summarised inspection findings

Abernethy Primary School

The Highland Council

25 September 2018

Key contextual information

Abernethy Primary School serves the town of Nethy Bridge which is situated in the Cairngorm National Park in The Highland Council. The current roll of the school is 73 from P1-P7 and 11 children who attend the morning only nursery. Changes in staff have caused some disruption in the past. The recent appointment of a new headteacher, principal teacher and class teacher has provided stability. The headteacher is also responsible for Deshar Primary School and both schools work together in a cluster arrangement. The school has a very active Parent Council which supports the school very well. The Parent Council helped to fund building of an outdoor classroom which supports the school's outdoor learning program.

1.1 Self-evaluation for self-improvement

good

This indicator defines rigorous self-evaluation as a responsibility of all stakeholders. It highlights the importance of partnership approaches to self-evaluation and continuous improvement. It emphasizes the need for strong leadership and robust analysis of a range of intelligence and data as essential features of effective continuous self-improvement. A key factor in this indicator is demonstrating the impact of self-evaluation in relation to outcomes for all learners. Their active participation in self-evaluation is therefore essential. The themes are:

- collaborative approaches to self-evaluation
- analysis and evaluation of intelligence and data
- ensuring impact on learners' successes and achievements

- Since taking up her post around 15 months ago, the headteacher has engaged positively with all stakeholders. She provides the school with much needed stability in leadership and a sense of direction. Stakeholders have told us that morale throughout the school is much improved. The headteacher has engaged well with staff, parents, children and partners to reflect on the work of the school. Along with staff, children and parents she has identified priorities for school development.
- The school has begun to use a range of approaches to improve communication with stakeholders, including using parent information evenings to gather parental views. The headteacher listens to all views and makes good use of these to refine the work of the school further. The headteacher's warm and consultative leadership style very much sets the tone for collaborative working. Recently staff and children worked together to restate the school's vision values and aims. The new vision 'moving forwards together' underpins the work of the school and the priorities for improvement.
- The school works with a range of partners who help the work of the school and benefit individual children. Although these partners are enthusiastic supporters of the school, they have not been very involved in helping the school to set priorities for improvement. The school should build upon the partners' engagement and look for ways to increase involvement in self-evaluation for improvement.
- The headteacher communicates well with parents and ensures that they are kept up to date with the work of the school through regular newsletters and the increasing use of social media, including class blogs. The Parent Council (PC) is enthusiastic in its support of the school improvement. The PC raises funds to support the work of the school and helps with the cost of trips and activities. A recent example of the PC's involvement and fundraising resulted in the

building of the very impressive outdoor classroom which is helping children's involvement in outdoor learning.

- Throughout the year, children have opportunities to think about school improvement and share their views about what they want for their school. These include the Pupil Council and the Junior Road Safety Officers. Children, however, do not always recognise their involvement in these groups as the school seeking and acting on their views. The headteacher has plans to increase opportunities for children to have their voice heard. Children are given opportunities to reflect on what they are learning in class and set targets which will help them make progress in their learning. Increasingly, children engage in evaluating their work and identifying their own next steps in learning. There is some scope for this to be carried out more consistently across all classes. The school's plans to take forward its new profiling system will help with this consistency and will help children to understand the progress they are making in their learning.
- Since her appointment, the headteacher has reinstated a number of helpful quality assurance processes which help staff reflect on their work and on children's progress. The school's quality assurance calendar across the school year ensures that there is appropriate attention on monitoring learning and teaching, and reviewing children's progress. The headteacher and principal teacher visit lessons and have regular focused discussions about individual children's learning. The headteacher samples children's work, and together with teachers analyses a range of assessment data, including standardised assessments. Staff have begun to use children's recent results in Scottish National Standardised Assessments (SNSA) in a diagnostic manner to identify gaps in children's learning.
- Teachers make predictions on children's attainment and progress through curriculum levels in literacy and English, and numeracy and mathematics based on their professional judgements and knowledge of children's learning needs. The headteacher meets with class teachers regularly to discuss individual children and make decisions about how they can be supported to make progress. Children who are not making good progress are provided with targeted interventions, for example, by receiving individual help from pupil support assistants.
- All staff are committed to, and engaged in, working together for school improvement. They work together collegiately and support each other. Throughout the year there are good opportunities for teachers to observe each other's lessons, learn from each other and share good practice. Through their moderation work with each other and with teachers in their cluster, teachers are improving their confidence in using national benchmarks in numeracy and mathematics, literacy and English. This helps them to be secure in their assessments of children's progress in their learning. There is scope to continue to deepen and extend teachers' understanding of national standards. The use of benchmarks should be extended to include other curriculum areas.
- Staff are committed to developing their practice. All participate in a range of Career-Long Professional Learning (CLPL) activities, which reflect their own needs and school improvement priorities. Teachers from P1-P4, along with nursery practitioners, have recently engaged in developing their skills in Emergent Literacy. This has benefitted children's learning in literacy and English.
- The school has put in place arrangements to help children develop a wide range of achievements and skills for learning through the introduction of weekly Skills Groups with their partner cluster school. The school's approaches to self-evaluation are leading improvements

for children. Children are keen to learn and are making progress in their learning. The school is now well placed to further improve. It should continue to focus on providing consistent approaches to tracking children's progress across the school and raise attainment further.

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.

3.2 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 school's attainment data indicates that, overall, most children at P1 and P4 achieved expected levels in literacy and numeracy across the school. There is variability in children's attainment at P7 with around a majority on track to achieve.
- Staff use The Highland Council's Summary of Progress and Performance (SPP) to track children's progress towards achievement of a level. The school has identified the need to introduce more robust processes for moderating standards both within the school and across schools to further inform the accuracy of professional judgements. The use of benchmarks should be improved as teachers develop their approaches to professional judgement and moderation.
- The headteacher has identified a need to ensure that barriers to learning do not become a focus when making professional judgements on levels achieved. In relation to this, staff should be aware of the need to be flexible in the range of evidence expected to reflect the progress of different groups of children.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, the majority of children make progress from their previous levels of attainment. Staff's engagement in Emerging Literacy has improved learning opportunities and methodology in P1-P4.

Listening and talking

- Across the school, children listen well and respond to each other in a respectful and courteous manner. Overall, they articulate their ideas clearly and confidently. At the early stages, most children demonstrate an increasing ability to take turns when listening and talking across a variety of contexts. They can ask and answer questions about texts to show understanding. Across first and second levels, most children contribute their ideas and opinions at appropriate times when engaging with others. Children at first level know about basic techniques for good listening. Children at second level demonstrate a high level of respect for the views of others and most can communicate clearly, audibly and with increasing expression. Children working at second level are able to listen and respond to each other when debating genre and authors' craft. The school needs to be more robust in tracking and monitoring children's progress in listening and talking. Success criteria specific to listening and talking should be agreed with children on a regular basis. This will build confidence when making professional judgements on levels achieved.

Reading

- At all stages, most children enjoy reading and are enthusiastic about their learning and progress. At the early level, children use their knowledge of key words and phonics to read aloud with increasing confidence. They talk enthusiastically about their favourite story books and why they enjoy them. Most children working at first level can read aloud familiar pieces of texts showing understanding and are beginning to use expression. They understand how a favourite author engages them in reading for enjoyment. Children who are on track to achieve second level can explain why they prefer particular authors and can make relevant comments about audience, plot, characterisation and setting. A few are able to give deeper personal responses to chosen texts and justify these with supporting evidence. Children across the school are motivated by a range of learning experiences in reading which encourages enthusiasm for reading. Across the school, children need to be challenged more in their learning to build on their independent reading skills. Best practice should now be shared across the school in order that pace and challenge is consistent.

Writing

- Across the school, individual children are making progress in their writing. At early level, they can use capital letters and full stops correctly in sentences most of the time. At first level, children write for a variety of purposes in imaginary and real life contexts. By the end of first level, most children can create a range of short and extended texts for different purposes using appropriate punctuation. Children who are on track to achieve second level know their strengths and next steps in writing. The majority of children working at second level use appropriate style and format to convey information and apply key features of the chosen genre. While there are some examples of high quality extended pieces of writing, there is inconsistency across the school. Children need to have more opportunities to apply their writing skills across learning in meaningful contexts.

Attainment in numeracy and mathematics

- Across the school there is variability in children's attainment in numeracy and mathematics. Almost all at P1 are predicted to achieve early level, most P4 and a majority at P7 are predicted to achieve first and second levels respectively. A few children exceed expected national levels. A notable proportion of children across the school have additional support needs and barriers to their learning. Overall, these children are being supported to make progress from their prior levels of attainment. Children present their work to a good standard across the school.
- The school has identified numeracy as an area for further development and this has been included as a priority within the improvement plan. There is a need to develop children's understanding of mathematical skills and concepts in a more holistic way.

Number, money and measure

- Children on track to achieve early level are able to order and count numbers forward and backwards within 20 with confidence. They are developing their knowledge of subtraction to 5 and are learning show their understanding of this by using appropriate mathematical symbols. Children on track to achieve first level are confident in their understanding of place value and can order numbers consistently and accurately. They can use multiplication tables and have a range of strategies to show their understanding of multiplication facts. They need to consolidate their understanding of the links between analogue and digital clocks. Children working within first level need further practice in understanding multiplication tables. Children who have achieved second level have a clear understanding of the equivalent forms of fractions, decimal fractions and percentages. Those still working with second level require

reinforcement of their work in this area to consolidate their learning. Children across the school have good opportunity to practise strategies for mental calculation. Teachers should ensure that children have opportunities to practise their skills of estimating as they move through school.

Shape, position and movement

- By the end of early level, children can confidently name and sort 2D shapes and 3D objects. Children at the end of first level use appropriate mathematical language to describe shapes and objects. Children who are on track to achieve second level by the end of this session are able to discuss the properties of triangles and circles with confidence. They have a good understanding of angles and use mathematical language to describe them. Children who are still working within second level have gaps in their knowledge of angles.

Information handling

- Across all classes, there are examples of children gathering and presenting data in a range of forms, including the use of digital tools appropriate to their ability and stage. They would benefit from increased opportunities to analyse the data collected and draw conclusions.

Attainment over time

- Overall, while a majority of children are making progress from their previous levels of attainment, the positive start made at early and first levels is not sustained to the end of second level. The school's attainment data does not clearly enough identify the progress children across the school are making towards achieving a Curriculum for Excellence level.
- Staff, along with the headteacher, use the information from the SPP to identify learners who are both attaining in line with expectations and those who are falling behind track. Strategies are then planned and interventions reviewed to support these children. Staff should ensure that there is a sharper focus on those recorded as not making expected progress through a level and appropriate action taken.
- The school is planning to review how they document progress over time using the range of evidence of children's work. Staff should ensure that any system introduced should allow for consistency across stages and smooth transition between classes.

Overall quality of learners' achievement

- Children's personal and wider achievements are recognised and celebrated through assemblies. They are proud to receive 'golden tickets' and 'Star Pupil Awards' for effort, achievements and behaviour. They appreciate receiving affirmation for their external achievements such as participation in swimming galas, a local 'Bake-off' and at the Grantown Triathlon. Various lunchtime clubs and the weekly 'Skills Group' activities, in partnership with the cluster school, provide opportunities for children to learn new skills and abilities. They also have opportunities to learn new skills through the Pupil Council, Laggan Rural Skills Day, the School Garden and the P6-nursery Buddies programme. The school promotes healthy lifestyles through 'Active Abernethy' and 'Active Play' activities such as 'Get on yer Bike' and the 'High Life Fit Kids Lunch Club'.
- Children are at the very early stage of profiling their various personal achievements in and out of school. There is a need for children to be more aware of the skills they are developing across all contexts for learning and to start to profile these in a structured and progressive way. The school recognises it now needs to track children's wider achievements more systematically.

Equity for all learners

- A small percentage of children across the school are registered for free meals and the allocation of Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) is below the national and local authority average. The school uses the allocated PEF funding for an increased emphasis on health and wellbeing. An 'Active Play' project encourages children to be more active and interactive, aspire to challenge and increase their motivation to achieve. The school plans to evaluate the effectiveness of this programme and measure the programme's contribution to ensuring that there is a positive impact on learning and attainment for targeted groups of children.
- Staff know the individual needs of children well and are aware of any barriers to learning, seeking ways in consultation with staff to ensure equity of outcomes for all children. In identifying the need to track participation, engagement and skill development across all areas of learning including wider achievement, staff will ensure that any gaps in achievement and barriers to participation are addressed.

Explanation of terms of quality

The following standard Education Scotland terms of quality 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.