Summarised inspection findings

Cromarty Primary School

The Highland Council

27 August 2019

Key contextual information

Cromarty Primary School is situated in the town of Cromarty. At the time of inspection, there were 52 children on the roll. All children reside in SIMD seven. The school has undergone a period of staff change in recent years including changes in headship. The headteacher has been in post for just over six months. The school has also recently had an extension providing a high quality learning environment for children.

1.3 Leadership of change	weak

This indicator focuses on collaborative leadership at all levels to develop a shared vision for change and improvement which is meaningful and relevant to the context of the school within its community. Planning for continuous improvement should be evidence-based and linked to effective self-evaluation. Senior leaders should ensure the need for change is well understood and that the pace of change is appropriate to ensure the desired positive impact for learners. The themes are:

■ developing a shared vision, values and aims relevant to the school and its community
■ strategic planning for continuous improvement
■ implementing improvement and change

■ The recently appointed headteacher has only been in post for six months and is gaining the trust of stakeholders. Her leadership is supporting a positive culture change in the school. A recent survey with children and parents on 'what matters' to them has indicated a clear need to develop an ethos and culture within the school where all feel valued. The headteacher, through her leadership approach, is beginning to effect this change. Building on the findings from the survey will be a useful next step in helping to shape a vision for the school that reflects the unique context of Cromarty.

■ Planning for continuous improvement is an important area that requires development. Changes in headship and the lack of continuity at this level have resulted in improvement plans that are disjointed. There is no clear articulation of what evidence has underpinned improvement plan priorities or how well these have been taken forward. Measures of success are not clearly defined. This makes it difficult to gather evidence to demonstrate how well these priorities have been overtaken. The headteacher has started the process of monitoring and evaluating the work of the school to inform a more meaningful improvement plan with clear outcomes for children. Overall, there is a recognition that the pace of change needs to be accelerated to keep abreast with national developments in policy and practice. At present, parents, staff and children have had little involvement in helping to inform the improvement plan.

■ The school's leadership of change over time has important weaknesses. Staff recognise that the pace of change needs to be increased across the whole school community to help children make the best possible progress. This includes the need to strengthen approaches to self-evaluation and strategic planning to secure improvements across the school. The headteacher has made an initial start to making use of self-evaluation processes to support the leadership of change and school improvement. She is beginning to use evidence from self-evaluation to inform the improvements required. However, the evidence is not yet sufficiently reliable to be used for this purpose. A clearer focus is required on how all information is scrutinised to monitor children's attainment in order for appropriate interventions to be put in place.

■ Staff are beginning to benefit from clear leadership and strategic direction to enable them to take on board leadership of change effectively. There are a few examples of staff leading

change across the school such as the work on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). The headteacher should build on the positive collegiate ethos among staff by helping them to develop pedagogical practice. Collegiate sessions need to have a clear focus on professional learning to help take the school forward. Opportunities for staff to evaluate the overall work of the school and the effectiveness of classroom practice needs to take place in a much more formal way.

- There is significant scope to develop children's engagement in the process of change. At the moment, there are only a few children involved in formal leadership roles and these are not sufficiently linked to meaningful improvements. The ethos and culture is now more conducive for children to take an active role in leading change across the school. We have encouraged the use of 'How good is OUR school' (2018) to support improvement in learner participation in self-evaluation and school improvement.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment	weak

This indicator focuses on ensuring high-quality learning experiences for all children and young people. It highlights the importance of highly-skilled staff who work with children, young people and others to ensure learning is motivating and meaningful. Effective use of assessment by staff and learners ensures children and young people maximise their successes and achievements. The themes are:

■ learning and engagement
■ quality of teaching
■ effective use of assessment
■ planning, tracking and monitoring

■ An ethos of mutual respect and trust is being established. This is supporting children to feel more confident in participating in their learning. The extension to the school building provides a very high-quality environment for learning. Facilities are used well to offer a wide range of learning opportunities for children within and outwith the school.

■ Children have the skills to contribute well to shaping what and how they learn. Providing greater levels of autonomy to children has the potential to improve their engagement so that they become more eager and active participants in their learning.

■ Across the school, children require more challenge in their learning. Tasks and activities are not well matched to the needs of children. This is an important area for improvement. In order to plan for appropriate challenge, teachers need to have a better understanding of children's prior learning. Developing tasks and activities that require higher order thinking, along with creating an ethos of self-challenge for children, will support their engagement in learning.

■ In almost all classes teachers provide clear explanations and instructions. In most lessons, teachers discuss with learners what they are expected to learn. They share the purpose of learning and how children will know if they have been successful. At times, the purpose of learning is often framed in terms of activities children are required to undertake and not linked explicitly to the learning itself.

■ The quality of learning and teaching is not supporting children to make the progress they are capable of. Overall, learning is too teacher-led with few opportunities for children to exercise choice, responsibility and independence. As discussed, a shared understanding of effective learning and teaching approaches at all stages in the school should be developed as a matter of priority.

■ The school uses a variety of assessment information including standardised assessments and a range of diagnostic assessment tools for literacy and numeracy. An agreed assessment framework, linking directly to planning, will support the identification of next steps in learning for all children. This will ensure progression across Curriculum for Excellence levels is consistent and matched to the needs of individual children. As discussed, the need for a review and evaluation of formative assessment approaches will ensure improvements in children's experiences and inclusion in the learning process.

■ Across the school, children are supported in setting targets in their learning, which are reviewed termly in dialogue with the teacher. Children are not always confident in discussing their targets, or in understanding the impact on their learning. More effective feedback for children is required so that they are fully aware of their strengths and next steps in learning.

■ The school has identified the need for a more coherent and progressive planning, tracking and monitoring approach. The headteacher has worked with teachers to develop and agree manageable processes to monitor children's progress in learning. They acknowledge that tracking and monitoring systems need reviewed to better support planning for learning through providing more robust sources of information. Ongoing involvement in the Associated School Group (ASG) moderation process is essential to build upon staff understanding of how moderation is an integral part of the learning, teaching and assessment process.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

■ The headteacher has made a promising start to developing a curriculum rationale which reflects the local context. She is keen to build on the start she has made in ascertaining the views of stakeholders of what makes Cromarty Primary School unique. Many of these aspects, such as the historic significance of the town, currently feature in the school's curriculum.

■ Staff have adopted the local authority curricular pathways for some aspects of the curriculum. At present, these support teachers planning in literacy and numeracy. In addition, school group work on 'writing' has provided staff with clear success criteria at each Curriculum for Excellence level in the form of 'I can statements'. In order to promote progress and achievement for all learners, staff should adopt and make use of the local authority's curricular pathways for the remaining areas of the curriculum as a matter of urgency. At the moment, there is too much emphasis on coverage of experience and outcomes.

■ The school recognises the need to review and refresh the curriculum. This should include planned professional learning in order to ensure a shared understanding by all staff. Staff do not yet have a clear understanding of how to plan using the experiences and outcomes across all areas of the curriculum or how these can be linked to deliver effective interdisciplinary learning.

■ Although the principles of curriculum design are not yet used to inform the development of the curriculum, teachers are increasingly providing children with relevant contexts for learning. The 'Young Person's Guide to Cromarty Website' and recent work on climate change are strong examples of this.

■ The recent world of work week has emphasised the skills and attributes required for success after leaving school. Consideration should be given to developing skills for learning, life and work across all contexts for learning. Opportunities should be provided for children to demonstrate these skills, allowing them to build on their prior learning as they move through the stages.

■ There is a clear focus on STEM supported well by partnerships with community and local businesses, including the local university. A useful transition project has been established that has the potential to provide continuity and progression in children's learning.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

■ Most parents are positive about their relationship with the school, feel that staff know their child well as an individual and appreciate the commitment of staff. Parents have commented on the focus and dedication of the headteacher and how this is raising the profile of the school within the local community. Communication and an open door policy including 'curriculum cuppas' are well received. Social media is also being used more regularly to inform parents about school events. The Parent Council uses social media to good effect, including the fundraising page.

■ Parents would like more quality information on how well their children are attaining and how they can support learning at home.

■ The Parent Council supports the life and work of the school in a variety of ways. In particular, Parent Council members are successful in organising and delivering a range of events to raise funds for the school. The Chair is keen to extend its role to start looking more critically at school improvement. Work on supporting the development and delivery of modern languages and the introduction of a coding club are important examples of this. Commendably, the chair has looked outwards to other schools for good practice. The work of the Parent Council is communicated to the wider parent body through digital media.

■ Staff have started to take forward Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) across the school and developing children's skills for learning, life and work. They have a range of partners who already support learning in school and staff are eager to harness the skills of partners to strengthen their curriculum. Plans are in place to develop the use of partnerships further through STEM project work.

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

■ There is an increasingly positive ethos within the school which is supporting children's wellbeing. The headteacher has adopted the local authority's framework for promoting positive relationships which is beginning to result in children feeling a greater sense of belonging at Cromarty Primary.

■ The school's strategic approach to wellbeing is being developed through an understanding of the social, economic and cultural context of the school community. Partners have contributed to this through the sharing of intelligence such as patterns and trends in the health needs of the local community. This is resulting in an emphasis on mental health and building the resilience of children, for example, through school based approaches and programmes.

■ Children have an awareness of the wellbeing indicators, although their understanding of these is not well developed. The headteacher is keen for children to self-reflect on their wellbeing using the wellbeing wheel. This could then be used to inform the discussions children have with teachers. In time, as this develops, there is potential for the school to be better placed to demonstrate improved outcomes for children. Early work has started in mapping out the wellbeing indicators against key areas of the health and wellbeing curriculum.

■ Children have a good understanding of how to lead a healthy lifestyle. They appreciate the importance of a balanced diet, understand the role of exercise in maintaining physical and mental health and recognise the importance of sleep. Children demonstrate responsible attitudes and have a good understanding of sustainable development. They are keen to make informed choices and are aware of the impact on the environment of human action. Work on creating cars from junk material and learning about plastics in the marine environment has further developed children's understanding.

■ The headteacher has established a more robust matrix of support for children requiring additional support in their learning. There is a clear overview in place of children at different stages of Getting It Right for Every Child (GIRFEC), including review dates. Child's plans are in place with targets personalised for each child. These should now be refined to make it easier for all involved to monitor and evaluate these. Multi-agency meetings, with representation from external agencies, provide coherent and integrated support to identified children. There is scope for teachers to better meet the learning needs of children requiring additional support. A useful 'staged approach – suggested strategies' for class teachers' could be the basis for discussing how to better meet the needs of individual children.

■ Support staff have a positive relationship with children. They have a good understanding of the needs of the children whom they support, although they are allocated to the full class. They are able to respond to the individual needs of children and provide targeted support including emotional check-ins. Children are more ready to learn and settled as a result. Support staff

recognise and are keen to evaluate their impact in ways that demonstrate the 'added value' to children.

■ Children's understanding of diversity, prejudice and discrimination is not developed well enough. Teachers should embed discussions of all relevant protected characteristics into teaching practices, so that children have the language, understanding and confidence to discuss prejudice. The headteacher recognises that further professional learning is required to secure a deeper understanding of the legislative framework in relation to equality and inclusion. It will be important for teachers to review and develop the curriculum to ensure experiences and practice reflect the world in which the children live and will work.

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
- Overall, children's attainment in mathematics and numeracy and English language and literacy is satisfactory.

- The inspection team conclude that children could be making better progress in their learning and achieving higher standards. There is scope to increase the pace of learning and challenge for children. There is a need to gather and use data about progress and attainment strategically to raise attainment for all children.

- The small school roll means that much care has to be taken when interpreting and analysing data and trends. In order not to identify any of the small number of children working at Curriculum for Excellence levels, HM Inspectors have not used the usual qualitative terms.

Attainment in literacy and English
- Children are making satisfactory progress in literacy and English.

Listening and talking
- Younger children are learning to listen and follow instructions, take turns in small groups and can confidently talk to adults and visitors to the school. As children progress through the school they have opportunities to undertake class talks, presentations and debates. Children would benefit from engaging in extended dialogue where they are building on each other's responses.

Reading
- Younger children are learning to identify common words, and use their knowledge of sounds and letters to read words. They are beginning to use pictures to help understand simple texts. Older children understand features of different types of texts. Approaches are beginning to improve children's comprehension skills and understanding of grammar. Older children can talk about characters, make predictions, scan and select relevant information. There is scope to provide more variety of reading texts to include digital texts, non-fiction and more challenging fictional texts and novels that reflect children's abilities and engagement with reading outside of school.

Writing
- Children are able to identify and describe the main features and differences between the genres. These include recounts, poems, persuasive writing and letters. There is scope to provide more opportunities for younger children to write in real and meaningful contexts. Older children respond positively to writing for a range of purposes across the curriculum, for example, writing to the local council to express their views. Younger children are growing in confidence with pencil control and formation of letters. They can use a capital letter and full

stop within simple sentences and have a growing awareness of punctuation and how it is used. Older children can link sentences using a range of conjunctions and can use paragraphs to separate thoughts and ideas. A developing awareness of grammatical features is starting to improve the quality of writing. There are effective examples of children producing written work across other areas of the curriculum such as science and health.

Attainment in numeracy and mathematics
- Overall, most children are making satisfactory progress in numeracy and mathematics.

Number, money and measurement
- Younger children are able to add and subtract comfortably within 20 and can count confidently beyond 20. They require greater practice in carrying out simple calculations mentally. They also have a good understanding of fractions and are able to split a whole into smaller parts. They can read o'clock times and represent these on clock faces. At both first and second level, children have a good understanding of place value. They can use the language of time but found conversion difficult. Children need to develop their skills in explaining their thinking to their peers and teachers. They are not confident in identifying the most efficient strategies to solve given calculations.

Shape, position and movement
- Younger children can use the language of simple direction and position. They are able to identify common 2D shapes and are able to identify shapes in the environment. As children progress through the stages in the school, they are able to describe the properties of 2D shapes and 3D objects. They have an awareness of angles, symmetry and transformation but this requires revisiting to consolidate their learning.

Information handling
- Children have a good understanding of interpreting data and information handling skills. They have carried out surveys such as the litter pick and presented data collected as a graph. Children now need many more opportunities to analyse and present a range of data and apply their learning in a range of contexts.

Attainment over time in literacy and numeracy
- Due to the small numbers of children at each stage within the school, data cannot define trends over time in attainment.

- The recently introduced tracking meetings are starting to provide the headteacher with a more accurate overview of pupil progress. Once embedded, this will support the review of the attainment of individuals and cohorts.

Overall quality of learners' achievements
- Children are achieving through a range of school groups or committees. These include community groups, a variety of after-school clubs and activities, such as an athletics club and football, with plans for a coding club to be run by parents and carers. Wider achievements are celebrated through wall displays, 'Head Teacher Awards' at assemblies and on the school website. All children participate in a points systems promoting positive behaviour. The points are accumulated over the year and shared at a Leavers Assembly with parents and carers. Children are awarded bronze, silver, gold and platinum certificates.

- Staff track attendance at school clubs and other activities, encouraging participation to ensure that everyone is included in an activity. The school should now support children to identify more explicitly the skills which they are developing through participation in wider achievement

opportunities and link this with their ongoing work on developing skills for learning, life and work.

Equity for all learners

■ As discussed, the school now needs to analyse its data to ensure that it is used effectively to provide information about the attainment of children and correctly identify pupils who may be experiencing barriers to learning. Staff understand the need for a clear and accountable plan for spending the Pupil Equity Fund that targets cohorts of children based on need.

- ■ Arrangements to support learners and their families
- ■ Collaborative planning and delivery
- ■ Continuity and progression in learning

■ Throughout the year, there are regular, planned visits of nursery children to the school. This provides the children with opportunities to familiarise themselves with the school building and take part in transition activities such as 'Little Dribblers'. Visits from the headteacher and class teacher to the nursery ensure that school staff are aware of children's pastoral needs and can address any specific concerns which parents may have about the transition. P6 buddies also visit the nursery to get to know the children in order to support them when they start school. The school would benefit from a clear picture of nursery children's progress in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. In order to achieve greater continuity of provision, a play-based approach would benefit P1 children.

■ Transition arrangements from P7 to S1 enable all children to visit Fortrose Academy for a series of planned activities across the year (a Ceilidh, basketball, football and disco), with enhanced transition arrangements for children who require extra support. Pupils work with other children from the ASG on a 'Resilient Kids' programme and have a shared ASG residential, allowing them to build relationships with other children from across the school group. A well-planned science transition project and a week's transition in June allow Fortrose Academy staff to gather information about the children's learning. The school now needs to evaluate the impact and effectiveness of curricular transition in terms of continuity of learning and progression for children.

■ Staff need to ensure they have robust information about the progress of children in their class in order to facilitate effective transition between classes and year-groups. The use of progression frameworks and formative assessment strategies would support staff in their judgements about children's learning and progress, ensuring that staff have high expectations and children are challenged effectively to achieve their best.

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.