

Summarised inspection findings

Arrochar Primary School

Argyll and Bute Council

26 March 2024

Key contextual information

Arrochar Primary is located on the shore of Loch Lomond in the village of Tarbet. It also serves the communities of Arrochar, Succoth and the surrounding rural area. At the time of the inspection, there were 41 pupils attending the school, ranging from Primary 1 – Primary 7. Children are taught across three multi-stage classes. There have been a number of changes of headteacher in recent years. A new permanent headteacher has been appointed and will take up post shortly. The current acting headteacher has overall responsibility for both Arrochar and Hermitage Primary schools. A principal teacher, three class teachers and several support staff work closely with the headteacher. Children are also regularly supported by peripatetic specialist teachers, an outdoor education instructor and two music instructors. The school receives Pupil Equity Funding.

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

- Relationships between staff and children are highly nurturing and respectful. All adults know each child very well and are encouraging and supportive in their interactions. Children are very supportive of one another, showing kindness in class and in the playground. Across the school, children relate well to the school motto 'dream it, believe it, do it' and through their daily interactions they demonstrate the school's values. They have a growing understanding of children's rights and link these to their own experiences of learning.
- Staff provide a calm, inclusive and positive learning environment. They create motivating learning spaces indoors and make highly effective use of school grounds and local outdoor areas. As a result, all children are fully engaged in lessons and activities across the curriculum. Teachers provide stimulating challenges and purposeful real-life contexts for learning for older children, which children enjoy and that capture their interest. Teachers offer lessons for younger children which often include an exciting opening event to inspire and promote thinking. Children work very well independently and collaborate effectively when in pairs and groups.
- Senior leaders and teachers discussed and agreed expectations and features of high-quality learning and teaching. As a result, teachers provide highly effective learning experiences for children consistently across the school. In all lessons, teachers' instructions are clear and children understand the purpose of their learning. Staff use effective questioning to check for understanding and extend children's thinking. Teachers use plenaries very well to summarise learning and to help children reflect on their skills. Children are becoming confident identifying measures for success in lessons and teachers should continue to explore ways to support children to do so. Staff provide a wide range of tasks, activities and open-ended enquiries that are well-matched to children's abilities. They provide regular opportunities for children to make choices and try new skills.

- Learning support teachers and support staff assist children well with their learning in class and when working with groups and individuals. They are sensitive and highly responsive to each child's wellbeing and learning needs. They provide a range of valuable targeted interventions to support children to practise key literacy and numeracy skills. This helps children who require additional support with their learning to make strong progress.
- Outdoor learning is an essential context in the school's approach to learning and teaching. School staff and partners work closely together to plan and deliver highly engaging learning experiences. They make very effective use of school grounds, the loch shore, woodlands and Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park. Experiences are well planned to ensure children build on and extend their skills as they move through the school. Staff measure the positive impact of outdoor learning and track children's progress regularly. The school's strong practice supports children to develop skills and capabilities for life and learning very well.
- Younger children learn through play experiences and open-ended challenge. They are developing important skills in creativity, perseverance and communication. Staff have a sound understanding of national practice guidance and continue to refine their approaches informed by professional learning. They create engaging learning spaces that support children well to be curious and make personal choices. They observe and interact with children effectively during play, asking thoughtful questions to extend learning. Staff should continue to consider how play-based learning experiences and spaces can offer further progression and challenge across the first level of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE).
- Staff and children make highly effective use of digital technologies and software to enhance and support learning and teaching. As a result, all children have well developed digital literacy skills. Interactive whiteboards, laptops and tablets are an embedded feature of almost all lessons. There are pupil 'Digital Leaders' in each class who provide useful peer and class support. Children regularly use a range of digital resources and applications to extend and share their learning, including programmable toys, artificial intelligence, coding and stop-motion animation. All children are becoming skilled in creating video and uploading content to online platforms to share with parents. Older children use a digital platform to access and complete homework. They record podcasts, create their own websites, and are currently developing their own digital school library.
- Children find regular opportunities to peer and self-assess their work helpful. In all lessons, teachers provide helpful and encouraging verbal feedback on children's learning. Staff should explore ways to provide more regular high-quality written comments in key areas of learning. Children are not yet confident identifying and discussing their own individual next steps in learning for literacy and numeracy. Teachers should help children create short-term personalised targets that focus on key knowledge or skills most helpful to develop. This will help children understand more clearly their next steps. It will also support children to take further ownership of their learning and recognise their own progress.
- Teachers make effective use of a wide range of assessments. They assess regularly children's learning in different contexts and across the curriculum. Senior leaders and teachers make very good use of assessment information to evaluate children's progress in learning. Data from standardised assessments is used well by staff to support professional judgements of children's progress and attainment.
- The principal teacher has embedded strong, effective processes for moderation, informed by her role as a Quality Assurance and Moderation Support Officer. She works closely with the headteacher and staff to plan regular opportunities to discuss and agree standards and focus on different aspects of children's learning, such as writing and numeracy. Teachers work well

collaboratively as a school team and value experiences moderating alongside colleagues from local schools, across the local authority and from two regional improvement collaboratives. As a result, teachers' professional judgements on achievement of CfE levels are robust and accurate.

- Teachers make effective use of CfE experiences and outcomes and local authority and school progression frameworks to plan children's learning across the curriculum. They plan well over different timescales and are responsive to children's interests. For example, children suggest questions they would like to explore during learning in social studies. Staff should consider ways to demonstrate more clearly how evaluations of children's learning and information gained from assessment is used to inform planning.
- Senior leaders use a detailed, comprehensive system to monitor and record children's learning progress. During regular tracking meetings, senior leaders and teachers discuss and record each child's progress across literacy and numeracy and for wellbeing. They use this information very well to identify, plan and evaluate targeted support and challenge.

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

Attainment in literacy and numeracy

- In June 2023, almost all children achieved nationally expected CfE levels in listening and talking at key milestones. Most children achieved expected levels in reading, writing and numeracy and mathematics. At each level, there are a few children exceeding national expectations. Senior leaders and staff can evidence that when children receive additional support, they make strong progress in their targeted areas of learning.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Children's progress and attainment in literacy and English is very good.

Listening and talking

- Across the school, almost all children are highly articulate and confident. They engage very well in conversations with school visitors and adults in their local community, for example during the 'Generation Group'. All children demonstrate and apply their skills in listening and talking well during pupil committee and leadership activities, and drama lessons. Young children listen carefully to instructions and ask thoughtful questions. Older children debate current issues confidently and are developing their note-taking skills. They listen well to peers and build on the answers of peers well during discussions. Children should continue to develop and apply their skills through meaningful contexts and across a range of media.

Reading

- Children demonstrate an enthusiasm for reading and make very good use of the school library to extend their skills. Younger children enjoy hearing stories, exploring books in the classroom reading corner and discuss favourite characters. They use their letter knowledge to sound out simple words and recognise a growing range of words by sight. As children progress through the school, they read confidently with growing fluency and expression. They enjoy discussing their preferences for different authors and genres, and choose increasingly challenging books. Older children answer and create literal, inferential and evaluative questions about texts. They should continue to develop their skills in discussing the different tools authors use to engage the reader, such as metaphors and emotive language.

Writing

- Across the school, children write regularly and successfully for a wide variety of meaningful purposes and authentic audiences. They particularly enjoy writing creatively, for example imaginative stories and character descriptions. As children progress through the school, their writing includes a wider range of sentence structures and increasingly sophisticated vocabulary. Younger children are developing their letter formation well and most are beginning to use capital letters and full stops accurately in their own sentences. Across first

and second levels, children apply their knowledge of spelling patterns accurately and make well-considered attempts when spelling more challenging words. Older children make effective use of punctuation in their writing including more complex examples, such as ellipsis and semi-colons. Children will benefit from continuing to regularly practise, apply and embed taught writing skills in context across the curriculum.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, children's progress and attainment in numeracy and mathematics is very good. Staff have developed teaching and learning approaches that help children to consolidate and build on their knowledge. Across the school, all children practise and apply their skills regularly within purposeful and real-life contexts. A few older children are involved in a challenge program with Strathclyde University. When participating, they demonstrate, transfer and apply their skills with increasing confidence to solve the problems posed.

Number, money and measure

- Younger children demonstrate a growing knowledge of place value and key number facts. They apply this well to new challenges and in their play. As children progress, they become more confident using an increasing range of strategies when adding, subtracting, multiplying and dividing. They share and explain their thinking processes. Older children understand common units of measure, convert between millimetres, centimetres and metres, and carry out multi-step calculations to solve problems. They apply their knowledge and understanding of money well, for example when working out a budget and calculating profit. Older children are exploring algebraic equations and number patterns and relationships, such as the Fibonacci sequence. Across second level, a few children will benefit from further practice with fractions.

Shape, position and movement

- Younger children name, identify and create a variety of two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects. They recognise these shapes in different orientations, sizes and in nature. Older children use clear directional instructions with programmable toys and coding. They demonstrate a sound understanding of compass points, angles and bearings.

Information handling

- Children apply their information handling skills regularly across the curriculum. Younger children collect and organise information pictorially and using tallies. They ask and answer questions about their findings. Children in Primary 4 - 7 confidently use software programs to collate and display data. They interpret information very well from a wide range of charts and graphs, and share their analysis. For example, creating bar and pie charts to share wellbeing survey results and learning for sustainability findings.

Attainment over time

- Senior leaders have robust evidence that demonstrates children maintain consistently high standards of attainment as they move through the school. Staff make effective use of the school's tracking system to analyse and understand patterns in whole school attainment. Where school-wide areas for improvement are identified and action taken, such as numeracy and mathematics, staff can evidence positive impact on children's attainment and progress. Staff use local authority progress and achievement data and standardised assessment information well to identify, plan and evaluate support for cohorts and individuals. Senior leaders and teachers should continue to develop how they analyse progress of groups of children, such as gender. This will help staff to accelerate further progress for identified groups.

- Children make strong progress in science as a discrete subject and in Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM). Children demonstrate an increasing understanding of scientific knowledge, investigation and problem solving as they move through the school.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Children contribute very well to the life of the school and wider community. They achieve success across a broad range of authentic, purposeful experiences and make meaningful decisions, collaborate and communicate well. This is a significant strength in the work of the school. Most children hold leadership roles, such as peer mediators, school ambassadors and house representatives. All children are active members of school committees, such as pupil council and eco-group. Older children develop skills in independence and resilience through planned annual residential excursions. Children's healthy lifestyles are also supported very well through work with Active Schools partners and events such as the 'Arrochar Challenge'.
- Working as a school, children have achieved seven 'green flag' awards for learning for sustainability. Recently, they received a nationally accredited silver award for their work on rights-based learning. Staff also value and share regularly all children's individual achievements through certificates, displays and online platforms.
- Children talk articulately about the skills they are developing for life, work and learning and reflect on these in their diaries or as a P1-3 class. Staff track children's skills, their participation in clubs and experiences, and their achievements. They identify any potential gaps and target support. As a result, all children succeed across a range of experiences.

Equity for all learners

- Senior leaders and staff know children and families very well and demonstrate a deep professional understanding of the school and community context. They use a wide range of data very effectively to decide where universal and targeted support will be most beneficial. Staff take action, including using Pupil Equity Funding (PEF), to support children who face potential barriers in their learning. Targeted supports, such as enhanced nurture provision, physical health support and literacy or numeracy interventions are helping to accelerate and support children's progress. Outdoor learning is also used very effectively to build children's resilience, confidence and engagement levels. As a result of these approaches to targeted support, children demonstrate increases in measures, such as readiness to learn, self-esteem, attendance and progress in learning.
- The headteacher and Parent Council work together very well to reduce the cost of the school day for all families. Staff provide free music tuition for older children and all children participate in regular lunchtime clubs. Senior leaders understand the challenges of a rural community and they consider carefully equity of social experiences. They ensure all children visit the national park, larger cities and places of interest, such as theatres and the Scottish Parliament to extend their lived experiences and confidence. Staff also plan regular experiences with wider groups of children from local schools to help build friendships. As a result, children feel included and supported.

Other relevant evidence

- Senior leaders monitor regularly children's attendance and timekeeping. They have well-established policies and procedures to support children and families. The school's attendance figures are above the local authority and national average.
- Children receive their full entitlement to two hours high-quality physical education each week. Teachers make very effective use of indoor and outdoor school and community spaces to deliver a progressive, engaging programme of physical education. There is also targeted support to learn to swim for a few children.
- The headteacher consults with staff and the Parent Council when determining the focus of the school's PEF spend. She shares the impact from this funding annually with all parents.
- Senior leaders and staff have developed an effective P7-S1 transition programme 'Hooked on Hermitage'. Hermitage Academy staff support older children's curricular transition across a number of subjects, including English, mathematics, home economics, technologies and science. Staff plan additional joint experiences for small cohorts of P7 children through close working with other local schools.

Practice worth sharing more widely

- Children contribute very well to the life of their school and their wider community. They achieve across a broad range of skills through creative and meaningful opportunities, including high-quality outdoor learning. Staff work very effectively with community partners and organisations when planning and providing learning linked across curricular areas. This well-considered approach also includes clear processes for staff to evaluate their work, and to track children's progress with their skills development.
- Teachers are highly effective in ensuring children apply their numeracy and mathematics skills and learning regularly within purposeful, real-life experiences. They skilfully plan and provide direct teaching and embed the practice of key numeracy and maths skills in lessons and activities. These feature across the curriculum and through a wide range of contexts, such as learning for sustainability and outdoor learning. Staff actively promote curiosity, creativity and inquiry within mathematics through science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) and enquiry challenges, and problem solving. This focus on the regular application of mathematics skills impacts positively on children's confidence, their interest and enthusiasm, and they make strong sustained progress in their learning. Children demonstrate resilience and increasing independence when applying their understanding of mathematics concepts to new and unfamiliar contexts. They recognise maths and numeracy skills are important for life, learning and work.

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.