

Summarised inspection findings

Dunscore Primary School

Dumfries and Galloway Council

4 December 2018

Key contextual information

Dunscore is a small school in Dumfries and Galloway. At the time of inspection the roll was 44 children across two classes. The schools is part of a partnership arrangement with Duncow and Moniaive Primary schools and led by the same headteacher. The staff team is now stable after a number of changes over the past few sessions.

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

- Over the past three years the school improvement plan priorities set out an agenda for improvement. The leadership model now in place across the three schools shows a promising start to increase the pace of change within Dunscore. However, over a longer period of time the pace of change has been too slow. Planned improvement priorities have not been achieved and those which have are not sustained. Moderation and assessment to inform professional judgement is at the very early stages of providing accurate information about children's progress. Children's progress through levels cannot be tracked systematically and as a result learning lacks sufficient challenge.
- The headteacher leads three partnership schools across the cluster. He is ably supported by a class committed principal teacher (PT) who deputises for him in his absence. The PTs ability to lead learning within her classroom is a model of good practice. The two senior managers work very well together and have well planned arrangements to support communication. In addition, the PT benefits from professional dialogue with the partnership PTs about the partnership priorities. With the stability in staffing, there are now more opportunities for the PT to share her good practice more widely across the school. Moving forward, the school should revisit the roles and responsibilities of all staff and adults working with children. Remits do not ensure an appropriate pace and change through identified improvement plan priorities. As a result children do not benefit from consistently high quality learning and teaching.
- In the relatively short time in post the headteacher's leadership has been very well received by children, parents, staff and the wider community. To raise standards he focused the whole school community on the school's vision, values and aims. Responses from stakeholders focused on 'What does it mean to be a pupil in Dunscore?'. As a result of the values work, a few children can articulate the school's motto 'to be the best we can be'. There is a need to continue to develop ongoing reflection and debate on the school's values. Presently children and the wider staff team are at the early stages of putting them into practice consistently. There is a need to ensure that leadership at all levels of the wider staff team is coherent, effective and impacts on raising attainment and outcomes for children.
- The headteacher developed a model for improvement and change across the three partnership schools that has the potential to have a positive impact. His positive relationships with children,

parents and staff ensure that they feel valued and part of the whole school community. Increasingly staff work alongside colleagues on moderation and aspects of curriculum development. For example, 1+2 modern language in primary schools, science technology engineering mathematics (STEM), health and wellbeing. This collaborative forum provides the opportunity for staff to share effective practice and implement changes to their own approaches to improve learning and teaching. The collegiate approach across the partnership schools is embraced by children, parents and staff. Members of the very well supported Parent Council value opportunities to link across the partnership schools. However, these processes are at the very early stages of development and, as yet, there is not enough impact in the school. There is a need to gather and synthesise evidence that reflects the context of Dunscore Primary School as well as its context within the partnership arrangements. The school should continue to increase the role of children, parents, staff and external agencies play in evaluating the work of the school. In addition, staff should ensure that targets within the improvement plan have clear measures of success that can be evidenced.

- The school reports that staffing levels this session are stable. This should help to take forward improvement priorities more effectively. Staff now need to ensure that priorities for improvement have sufficient focus on ensuring all children experience high quality learning through all the experiences in which they are involved. There are many individual examples of good practice across the school which should be shared to help address variability in children's progress. The school needs, as a matter of urgency, to review the input of all staff who lead and support learning and teaching in campus and off campus. For example, travelling to events or learning outwith the school grounds.

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

- Positive relationships are valued by children. Of note is the commitment that all staff have to ensuring a positive and supportive ethos. Most children feel that their views are listened to and enjoy opportunities that they have to personalise learning. For example, older children create questions and lines of enquiry during topic work. In examples of learning where their needs and interests are met very well, children are highly motivated and engaged. They regularly work in small groups to complete tasks and learn from each other. However, too many children are at the early stages of engaging fully during collaborative tasks. There is a need to ensure that all children are highly motivated, challenged and engaged in their learning. In doing so, develop their skills as independent and responsible learners with increased opportunities to lead their own learning.
- The context of the school involves children experiencing learning from a wide range of teachers and adults. Learning takes place in the school and outwith the school grounds for example, swimming lessons or pre-school and secondary transition shared learning projects. Volunteer helpers, support for learning assistants and visiting specialists deliver examples of valuable learning experiences. Children are not yet involved fully in planning their own learning. As a result they are not skilled at making links across their learning or understanding their skills, attributes and capabilities across different contexts.
- We observed teachers using local authority guidance well to plan learning that reflects the context of the school. Most learning and teaching involves staff differentiating tasks by outcome and there are a few examples where this works well and is effective. There are examples of skilled questioning and higher order thinking that extends the learning of a few children very well. In addition, success criteria used at the appropriate level for the different groups of children provides challenge for some younger children in the classes. However, too often across the varied learning contexts the pace of learning is too slow due to the limited use of differentiation in learning. The school is aware of this and plans to improve coherence of experience. Staff are committed to ensuring that all children make very good progress at all times. Staff now need to develop their skills in observing learners progress during tasks and activities and adjusting their teaching promptly to meet children's needs more effectively.
- Across the partnership schools and the wider cluster staff share practice. They engage in moderation activities and are very positive about the impact this has on them as they improve their understanding of standards. In addition, they use a range of standardised assessment information for literacy and numeracy to track children's progress. However, there is limited understanding of the use of assessment to support ongoing learning and teaching. Assessment information is not robust enough or take enough account of both the ongoing and periodic assessment information. There is a lack consistency and coherence across the range of teachers working with children as individuals or in classes. Too often learning is fragmented

and does not link well enough across the curriculum. In addition, children's progress through a level is not evidenced sufficiently well. Children themselves are unable to talk about their strengths in learning and understand their next steps to improve.

- Staff are improving how they plan learning across all curricular areas. For example, assessment in art, is embedded well within Curriculum for Excellence experiences and outcomes. Children are knowledgeable about a range of artists, their style and they apply these techniques in their own creations. Moving forward there is a need to move from coverage of experiences and outcomes to more fully planned learning. In doing so, staff need to develop a shared understanding of expected standards across the levels. Currently, evidence of learning does not show sufficient depth of children's knowledge, challenge or application across contexts.
- Teacher's explanations are overall clear and they discuss learning intentions and success criteria with children. Recently introduced target setting is beginning to develop children's skills in learning conversations. This process is at the early stages of development and children are at the early stages of understanding the relevance of target setting. Improving the quality of feedback to children will enable them to increase their skills in knowing their strengths and next steps in learning.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- The school recently revisited its vision, values and aims in order to better reflect children's views and the context of Dunscore Primary School. The school should now revisit the curriculum rationale as planned. Staff refer to and make use of the experiences and outcomes across all curricular areas when planning learning. Recent work focused on developing learning pathways for science, health and wellbeing and Religious and Moral Education is positive. The school has identified developing STEM as a priority and is working with partner schools to develop this further. Teachers should now take more account of the principles of Curriculum for Excellence when planning learning.
- The school ensures children receive two hours of quality physical education (PE) per week. The visiting specialist worked across the Wallacehall cluster to develop a clear learning pathway based on health and wellbeing skills throughout the broad general education. He is piloting approaches in one of the cluster schools to improve children's understanding of themselves as learners in relation to physical health. He is well-placed to support professional dialogue with the Dunscore staff team about their improved health and wellbeing programmes. In doing so, develop children's skills about knowing their strengths and next steps in relation to health and wellbeing.
- Staff work very well at times of transition to support children as they move to the next stage in their learning. Transitions are strong through the many enjoyable joint weekly learning activities with the associated pre-school. Senior pupils take part in a joint literacy task with the local high school, enhanced transition to secondary school begins at Primary 5. There are plans to evaluate the impact of this work and if successful extend it further.
- Staff provide opportunities for children to use literacy and numeracy through work in other curricular areas and through interdisciplinary learning. They should continue to develop this work to ensure children can apply their knowledge in a range of contexts across the curriculum. Staff are developing a range of approaches for children to experience outdoor learning including redesigning the garden area as part of their Woodland Trust work. The school is keen to develop this further to ensure it is an integral and embedded part of the school's curriculum.
- While work on careers education is at an early stage, staff along with a range of partners, are helping children develop an understanding of the skills for life, learning and work. Children are beginning to explore the skills they are developing in class in relation to the world of work. They show an awareness of how these are needed for a range of contexts outwith the classroom.
- The school needs to further develop its programme of religious and moral education in order to include more opportunities to explore other cultures and religions. There is scope to develop the assembly programme to explore themes which challenge discrimination, celebrate diversity and explore children's rights and responsibilities.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- The school has positive links with partners in its community. This is a major strength of the school. Partners have a very good understanding of the school's context and the uniqueness of its rural location. In addition, the common understanding of striving to achieve a range of opportunities and experiences for children is notable. The ethos of the school is warm and welcoming and partners enjoy sustained links. Events that are held and led by parents, encourage former pupils and families to maintain a link with the school. All partners understand the purpose of the contribution they make to the wider life of the school and aim to improve outcomes for all learners.
- Collaboration across the learning community schools is strong and staff work collectively to learn together and share ideas. The focus on moderation activities, most recently in mental mathematics is very positive. Staff should now take forward approaches to moderation that are specific to the context of this school and ensure these lead to robust professional judgements. Staff work well as a team and also within the triple partnership approach. They welcome the opportunity to strengthen leadership at all levels through teamwork and are committed to providing varied learning opportunities to suit the interests of all children.
- The school introduced child led learning conversations to engage parents and better inform them about their children's learning. Parents feel their involvement in the life of the school and their child's learning is highly valued and respected. Children are beginning to benefit from the skills and experiences of parents to develop and support aspects of the curriculum. The school recognises the need to develop this further. The Parent Council is an asset to the school. They are very supportive and have a significant number of parents actively involved through their activities.
- Staff have built effective partnerships and relationships with the local community. This includes strong links with the local church and regular visits from the school chaplain. Children have developed citizenship skills through their fundraising to support the local food bank. The community police effectively support health and wellbeing for senior pupils through Operation Safety. The school is particularly proud of its ongoing partnership with the Woodland Trust developing an impressive garden area in the school grounds. The Fairtrade links are very well established and there are plans in place to improve this 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. At the time of the inspection, there were no identified areas for development.

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

- Across the school the positive relationships and welcoming environment modelled by the headteacher are valued by children, parents and staff. The strong commitment to making children, their families and visitors to the school welcome is a strength. Staff value children as individuals and work on building trusting relationships. Children feel happy and enjoy working with peers across the year groups in different activities. Overall, children have positive relationships with each other and there are examples of children supporting each other very well. They have a strong sense of belonging and being part of the 'Dunscore family'. The school is proactive in overcoming barriers that prevent children's participation in events outwith the local community.
- The headteacher is aware of his roles and responsibilities relating to the statutory requirements. Individual plans for children requiring support set out targets and planned interventions that are broadly appropriate. The arrangements and approaches monitor children's progress with additional support needs are under review. The school is making a positive start to involve children, parents and staff more fully involved in target setting.
- Staff are developing their understanding of the wellbeing indicators and what that means for the children in the school. The recently revised health and wellbeing programme now includes a greater focus on children's mental health. Partnership work with the Active schools coordinator and visiting PE specialist is another strength that enhances the depth of learning within aspects of wellbeing. Previously staff undertook professional learning linked to Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC). Moving forward, there is a need to revisit GIRFEC and improve approaches by staff, including visiting teachers and those in schools for short periods of time, in supporting children's understanding of their wellbeing. GIRFEC approaches are not joined up or underpinned by focused tracking and monitoring. As a result, children are not yet confident in knowing what the wellbeing indicators mean to them as individuals. They do not benefit from focused conversations about their wellbeing that help them make informed choices about a healthy lifestyle.
- Staff identify children with barriers to their learning quickly. They are developing their understanding of strategies to improve further the universal support. The school does not have a clear overview of universal support and its relationship with targeted support. In addition, there is a need to be clear about how interventions will make a positive difference for children. This includes the organisation of learning and deployment of all staff. Staff would benefit from more professional learning on how to differentiate learning as part of the universal support for the multi-stage arrangements within the school. There is a need for all staff including support staff, parents and teaching staff working with children in the school to have clearly defined roles and responsibilities.

- Inclusion is embedded within the ethos of the school. The high numbers of children transferring to the school are very positive about how included they feel. Children feel that they are encouraged to keep healthy and active. The school previously undertook some work on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). However, children are not able to talk about their rights with confidence. Moving forward there is a need to ensure that diversity is celebrated and children are skilled at challenging discrimination.

3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

weak

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

- Attainment data provided by the school is based on teachers' professional judgements. There is more work to be done to ensure that staff have a shared understanding of standards to make robust professional judgements. For session 2018-19, the school is predicting that, overall, almost all children will achieve expected levels in literacy and numeracy across the school. The inspection team found these did not reflect well enough national standards of expectations for children at early, first and second level. Sampled evidence shows that there is much room for improving children's progress and attainment for the majority of children.
- Staff are continuing to develop confidence in making professional judgements about children's progress in Curriculum for Excellence. The school plans to support this work by taking forward refined approaches to moderation, assessment, planning, and tracking and monitoring to improve further the accuracy of judgements.

Literacy and English

- Overall, the children's attainment or children's progress of literacy and English across the school is weak.

Talking and listening

- At the early level, children are making some progress in talking and listening. Their skills in following instructions closely are not yet well enough developed. In the best examples, children share their thoughts and opinions and give reasons for them. Those at first level are developing skills in talking in pairs and trios and are growing in confidence when articulating their thoughts and ideas. At the second level, children are able to talk about some opportunities to present and debate topics. Children across the school are less confident when talking to visitors. They should now be given a wide variety of planned and progressive opportunities to develop their skills in talking and listening more systematically to ensure that they make appropriate progress.

Reading

- Attainment in reading is satisfactory. Children across the school show an interest in reading and enjoy a wide range of fiction and non-fiction texts. They make regular visits to the well-resourced school library to choose personal reading books. Novels at the first and second levels, are used well to interest and encourage reading for enjoyment. At the early level, children are making good progress in recognising phonics and using their knowledge to attempt new vocabulary. At first level, children are developing good expression and understanding when reading aloud. However their skills in understanding texts they have read need to be developed in a planned, progressive approach. By second level, children take responsibility for reading but are less confident in offering opinions about their choices. They

are at the early stages of identifying features that illustrate settings or characterisation. Overall, all children would benefit from increased opportunities to develop their skills in analysing and evaluating texts that they have read in order to develop a wider range of comprehension skills.

Writing

- Attainment in writing is satisfactory. Across the school, most children are gaining a range of technical skills in writing. Those working at early and first levels make attempts to write. A few children are skilled in phonics and spelling but more emphasis should now be placed on the accuracy of written work. Children at the first and second levels have some understanding about the use of language and vocabulary. At the second level, children are developing a variety of ways in which to engage the reader. Throughout the school, the standard of writing is variable. Expectations of what children can achieve should be increased. The school should now develop consistent approaches to develop progressions of children's writing skills.
- Overall children's progress in numeracy and mathematics is weak. Recent approaches to raise attainment in numeracy and mathematics are not yet impacting on children's progress. Currently, the development of children's skills in numeracy and mathematics is overly reliant on a commercial resource. As a result, there are gaps in children's knowledge, understanding and application in aspects of numeracy and mathematics, including making mental calculations and interpreting problems confidently in order to work out solutions. The majority of children are unable to apply numeracy across their learning sufficiently well.

Numeracy and mathematics

- At early level children can recognise numbers up to five. At first level most can add two digit numbers up to ten and a few can add them to 20. Children's written calculations are accurate and they add a single digit to two digit numbers well. At second level they work confidently with numbers up to a million. All children are confident in mental calculations of additions to ten. Across the school children are less confident with mental calculations and their application in a range of contexts.

Shape, position and movement

- Most children working at early level recognise simple two dimensional shapes. At first level a few identify simple two dimensional shapes and three dimensional objects. Most are unable to identify the properties of shapes. At second level children understand coordinates and can plot and record using coordinate notation. The majority lack confidence and depth of knowledge in their mathematical application.

Information handling

- At early level children are not yet sufficiently skilled in talking about information handling. At first and second level they knew about simple graphs. There is scope to widen the range and type of graphs that children create and analyse. To develop their skills in applying information handling skills in real life contexts.

Attainment over time in literacy and numeracy

- Over the last few years, information gathered on reading, writing and numeracy was informed by a range of standardised assessments. This narrows the data available to accurately reflect children's progress over time. Staff are at the early stages of using information to use assessment information effectively. They are unable to reflect patterns to attainment and plan next steps in learning. As a result, the school does not have accurate information about children's progress through Curriculum for Excellence levels over time. Teachers are becoming increasingly aware of the socio-economic background, additional support needs or any other

potential barrier to attainment and should continue to take steps to ensure children are well supported.

Achievements

- The school has a well-established culture of recognising and celebrating the successes and achievements of children, which are shared across the community. There are some opportunities for children to develop interests and skills and the school should continue with plans to further develop these.
- The school makes good use of the local environment to support children as they develop interests, social skills and an understanding of the contribution they can make to their own community. Across the school children are learning about the environment and making use of outdoor settings to apply their learning and skills. Children are developing a sense of citizenship and community involvement through work with local groups.
- Through their involvement in different school improvement groups, children are beginning to feel empowered to influence aspects of school life. They take on roles as representatives on the Pupil Council and lead and contribute to the Green Committee, Fairtrade Group and Fundraising Group. Children are developing the skills needed to work as team members and listen to and act on the views of others, leading to changes which impact on children's experiences.
- The school encourages and supports children to participate in local sports festivals, music performances and day and residential trips. These help children develop important skills for life, learning and work. There are systems in place to ensure children's experiences are not limited due to location or financial situations.
- The school promotes participation and achievement of all children. These are celebrated at school assemblies. Staff offer lunchtime clubs, such as badminton and netball. The school recognises the need to develop and extend the range of opportunities offered and the need to monitor and track children's participation and achievements.

Equity for all learners

- The school knows the demographics of the population well. They have recently focused resources on supporting literacy and health and wellbeing. The school should continue to monitor the impact of this strategy on raising attainment.

Choice of QI : 2.4 Personalised support

- Universal support
- Targeted support
- Removal of barriers to learning

- The school has a positive strategy for securing positive relationships and behaviour. Learning targets are in place specific to a few individual learners which builds on prior learning. These are reviewed and evaluated systematically and next steps are identified. Whilst pace and challenge of learning is effective in some lessons, there are opportunities to further refine this to ensure purposeful engagement for all children.
- The school is at the very early stages of identifying targeted support through reliable and valid assessment. Plans for timely and proportionate support are not yet implemented effectively. Parents, partners and specialist teaching support are involved in decisions about learning. The school recognises the need to further involve children in this process. Staff should now ensure that the staged intervention process is fully implemented and all children's needs are being met.
- Staff are committed to reflecting on their practice and to working collaboratively in order to meet the needs of all their learners. There is a strong ethos across the school to minimise the impact of potential barriers to learning. There are a few examples of removing barriers to learning that impact very well. This includes targeted support to improve the reading skills of a few children.
- Moving forward there is a need to provide clarity of roles and responsibilities in relation to universal support. We discussed with the school the need for staff to have a clear understanding of the context of the school and the needs of the children. Currently systems in place do not ensure that needs are well enough met. Once this is established, create a coherent plan implemented over time to develop universal support strategies that will effectively meet the wide range of children's needs. There is an opportunity for all staff and those who support learning to revisit the staged intervention process and increase the sustainability of interventions.

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.