

Summarised inspection findings

Mossbank Primary School

Shetlands Islands Council

21 November 2023

Key contextual information

Mossbank Primary School is situated 28 miles north of Lerwick, on the mainland of Shetland. The school catchment area covers the communities of Mossbank, Firth and Toft. Forty-five children currently attend the school across two multi-composite classes. The school also has an early learning and childcare class with places available for children aged two until starting primary school. The school was built in 1980. In addition to the classrooms, the school has a library, art room, music room and multi-purpose hall.

The headteacher has been in post since 2017. Since her appointment, the staff team across the school and early learning and childcare class has had many changes. There is now a permanent team in place. The headteacher has a teaching commitment of 1.5 days each week.

Almost all of the children who attend the school live in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation decile five. In session 2022/23 the school received £8,575 Pupil Equity Funding. 22% of children are entitled to free school meals. Attendance figures are usually in line with the national average. However, attendance figures dropped below the national average in session 2020/21.

1.3 Leadership of change

good

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 headteacher has an ambitious vision for the school. She is held in high regard by the whole school community. Children, parents, staff and partners value her kind and caring approach. Since taking up post in 2017, she has led the school through a range of significant staffing challenges and periods of school closures. This has had an impact on the pace of change.
- The vision, values and aims are displayed throughout the school. In addition, children have created a school motto 'think big, dream bigger' to explain what the vision means to them. Staff and children have also agreed on a school statement 'ready, respectful and safe' to support the development work on wellbeing and engagement.
- All staff have a very good understanding of the unique benefits and challenges of the local community. The headteacher has prioritised rightly improving the wellbeing of children and developing positive relationships across the school. She has built effective partnership working with a range of organisations to provide valuable support to children and families. As a result, children are happy and settled at school. Children and families feel supported well to overcome any challenges they face. Staff are now ready to build on this to improve further approaches to learning and teaching.
- All staff are involved in evaluating the work of the school and agreeing school improvement priorities. The standards and quality report clearly outlines progress made and appropriate next steps. Staff have agreed three school improvement priorities for the year ahead. These

priorities focus on raising attainment in mathematics, embedding a rights-based approach across the school and improving the use of digital technologies. In taking forward these priorities, staff should ensure there is a clear focus on improving the quality of learning and teaching. The headteacher creates a parent friendly version of the plan to share with families. She includes ideas on how parents can help the school with the priorities. The headteacher should continue to develop approaches to involving children and families in the school improvement process.

- Teachers engage in meaningful professional learning linked to their own professional development and school priorities. Recent examples include, play pedagogy, promoting positive relationships and improving approaches to writing. Staff talk positively about the impact of professional learning on their skill and confidence. There is evidence of their learning impacting positively on children's engagement, improving learning experiences in the younger class and raising attainment in writing. Teachers should continue to engage in high-quality professional learning. This should support further approaches to improving learning and teaching and developing a stronger understanding of national expectations across the curriculum.
- The headteacher seeks the views of parents through informal discussions and questionnaires. She takes on board feedback and makes changes based on the views she gathers. For example, parents shared their views on the snacks available in the tuckshop. Changes were made to ensure there were healthy options for children. A few parents would like more information about the work of the Parent Council.
- Children across the school feel valued and believe their voice is heard. All children in P7 join the pupil council. They are supported by representatives from P4 to P6. The pupil council are currently consulting with all children on how to spend money raised at a recent enterprise day. All children are ready to extend their leadership roles and become more involved in evaluating the work of the school.
- The headteacher has made effective use of Pupil Equity Funding (PEF). After consulting with staff, she initially used PEF to employ a family support worker to meet the needs of families. Together they planned a range of supports for identified children and families. They closely monitored the impact and can evidence improved attendance, increased engagement and reduced anxiety for targeted children and families. Parents are made aware of the impact of PEF through the standards and quality report. The headteacher is now building on this and is using PEF to employ pupil support staff with a focus on improving attainment. This approach has ensured children are supported to be in school and engage in the supports provided.
- The team at Mossbank Primary School has undergone many changes in recent years. There is now a permanent team in place who have a shared, aspirational vision for children and families. Children feel valued and are ready to take on greater responsibility for influencing and delivering positive change in their school. The headteacher should build on this positive start ensuring children and staff have opportunities to lead and manage change across the school. This should support her to increase the pace of change and realise her ambition for all children at Mossbank Primary School.

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

- Children at Mossbank Primary School experience a very caring and nurturing ethos. Relationships across the school are positive and reflect the school values. Children interact respectfully with their peers, adults, and visitors to the school. All staff have participated in a range of activities to develop further their practice to support wellbeing and help children overcome difficulties in learning.
- The headteacher has worked with staff to enhance the learning environment. Staff have created calm classrooms and interesting shared spaces that promote curiosity and investigation. As a result, across the school most children engage well in their learning. Most children work well in pairs and groups. Almost all children are respectful of each other and participate well in class discussions. Teachers have rightly identified the need to develop children's independent learning skills. They should ensure children are supported to take increasing responsibility for their learning.
- In almost all lessons teachers share the purpose of learning well. In a majority of lessons, teachers help children to understand how to be successful in their learning. Teacher's explanations and instructions are clear. They ask questions to check children's understanding. Teachers should develop further their approach to using questioning to deepen and extend children's thinking. Teachers differentiate learning well for the majority of children in the multi-composite classes. This is particularly effective during whole class lessons. However, follow-up tasks and activities planned for children to complete independently, are not always set at the right level of challenge. Teachers now need to ensure learning activities that are not teacher led are appropriately challenging to meet the needs of all children. In a few lessons, the pace of learning is too slow. Teachers should increase the pace of learning to ensure children remain focused on their learning tasks. The headteacher should now work with staff to explore the features of effective learning and teaching. This should support them to plan high quality learning experiences for all children across all areas of the curriculum.
- All children set a learning target each term. They choose pieces of work they are proud of to include in their 'Take a Look Book'. Teachers add photographs and information about charity events and school outings children have taken part in. Children are proud of their books and enjoy using them to share their learning with their parents. Teachers are keen to develop these books to ensure they capture the progress children are making. In taking this forward, they should consider increasing the number of targets children set and how often they review them. This should help children understand themselves better as learners.
- Teachers use interactive whiteboards to display information about tasks and share video clips. Children use laptop computers to access online games during literacy and numeracy. Older children use computer applications to create charts displaying information in maths. Staff have plans to develop further approaches to developing the use of technology across the curriculum.

This will support them to ensure children access and use a broader range of technology for a range of purposes.

- Teachers have taken positive steps to introducing play pedagogy in the younger class. Staff have developed attractive spaces to provide opportunities for children to explore, solve problems and be creative. Staff are very reflective and recognise their successes and where practice continues to improve and develop. As they move forward with play, it will be important to look at the balance of teacher directed, teacher initiated and child-initiated experiences. This should help them to ensure all children experience the right level of challenge in their learning. Staff should also extend their work with practitioners in the early learning and childcare class. This will support them to develop a clearer understanding of progress across early level.
- Teachers use a range of assessment approaches across the year. They use summative assessments, including Scottish National Standardised Assessments, to gather evidence on the progress children are making in literacy and numeracy. Teachers use the assessment information to identify gaps in children's learning. They are at the early stages of using assessment information effectively to inform their planning. In a few lessons, teachers use peer and self-assessment approaches. Teachers should build on this to help children understand the progress they are making in their learning. Teachers should reengage in moderation activities to improve their confidence in making professional judgements about children's progress. They need to use the National Benchmarks to develop a shared understanding of standards and expectations across all stages. This should help to ensure attainment of a level data is more accurate.
- Teachers make effective use of a three-year overview planner to plan learning for the multi-composite classes. This ensures coverage of experiences and outcomes across the curriculum. Teachers use newly introduced progression pathways to plan learning in literacy and English, numeracy and mathematics and health and wellbeing. These progression pathways are beginning to support teachers to plan learning activities and identify opportunities to assess progress. Teachers should build on this to ensure children experience progression across all curriculum areas.
- The headteacher meets with staff three times each year to check the progress children are making in literacy and numeracy. They discuss the effectiveness of supports and interventions for pupils with additional support needs at these meetings. The headteacher should now ensure discussions have a stronger focus on the progress of all children. Together with staff, she should agree and record clear next steps for learners with a strong focus on improving outcomes and accelerating progress.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- Teachers use progression pathways for literacy and English, numeracy and mathematics and health and wellbeing. These pathways support teachers well to plan learning at the right level for children across the school. Staff are at the early stages of developing progression pathways for other areas of the curriculum. They should take this forward at pace to ensure children experience breadth and depth across all areas of the curriculum.
- Teachers plan interdisciplinary learning for their multi-composite classes using a three-year rolling programme. This ensures coverage of Curriculum for Excellence experiences and outcomes. Teachers are flexible in their approach and take account of local events, heritage and children's interest when choosing contexts for learning. Teachers should continue to involve children in planning aspects of their learning including opportunities for personalisation and choice.
- Children talk positively about learning French in school. Older children have an interest in languages and have worked with their teacher to plan opportunities to explore a range of languages as part of the 'choose your own learning' time. Children across the school are not currently receiving their entitlement to 1+ 2 languages. The headteacher should review the approaches to 1+2 languages to ensure staff are able to deliver high-quality learning experiences across the school.
- Teachers plan a range of interesting learning experiences outdoors. For example, children in the younger class explore scale and measurement by drawing in the playground. The school benefits from extensive outdoor space. Children enjoy looking after the school hen sand are excited about the newly built polytunnel and opportunities to grow their own produce. Planned developments of the school grounds will support teachers to build on this practice and plan high-quality, progressive outdoor learning across the curriculum.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- The headteacher prioritises relationships with families and the school community. She ensures she is available for parents at all times and has developed a range of welcoming spaces for parents to use. The headteacher works closely with the family support worker to ensure families are supported to participate in events and meetings at the school. As a result, almost all parents feel comfortable approaching the school with questions, suggestions or concerns.
- Parents are invited into the school every term for 'Family Friday'. Parents and children are able to take part in a range of activities together, for example, sports games and arts and crafts. This also provides parents with the opportunity to visit classrooms and look at their child's work. Multi-agency partners and local groups also contribute to the planning and delivery of these events. These partners planned three 'Family Fun Days' during the summer break to ensure children and families continued to have opportunities to come together when the school was closed. Parents and children speak positively about 'Family Friday'. They enjoy spending time together in school.

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

good

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

- The headteacher has a clear strategy for developing health and wellbeing across the school. Children's wellbeing is at the heart of everything that happens at Mossbank Primary School. All staff have engaged in meaningful professional learning on nurture and promoting positive relationships. This is leading to a shared understanding of the importance of wellbeing and its impact on learning and achievement. All children learn in inclusive, nurturing classrooms. Children across the school get on well with all staff and one another. They interact with each other and adults with respect. Staff support children well to use the school statement 'ready, respectful, safe' to reflect on their behaviour and actions. A few children access targeted nurture support within the school.
- Children complete daily wellbeing check-ins. Staff use this information effectively to respond quickly and sensitively to any worries and concerns. As a result, children trust the adults in the school. Almost all children feel safe at school and can identify at least one adult they can talk to if they are worried or upset. All children complete wellbeing wheels once each year to reflect on aspects of their own wellbeing. Staff should now consider how to support children to reflect more regularly on their wellbeing and identify where they might need extra help and support.
- Children have an understanding of their own wellbeing. They talk well about how their experiences at school support and improve their wellbeing. Children identify risks in their local area such as open water and busy roads. They value their swimming lessons as part of the physical education (PE) programme and road safety lessons. Children know developing these skills keeps them safe in their community. All children take turns at looking after the school hens, Meg and Jen. They are proud of the responsibility they have for feeding and caring for the animals. Children enjoy eating lunch in their house groups. Older children ensure younger children are included and help them to eat their lunch. Almost all children choose side salads and fruit at lunchtime. They know that eating fruit and vegetables improves their health.
- Children experience a range of learning through their health and wellbeing curriculum. They talk about how this learning helps them improve their mental and physical health. Children enjoy the range of sports they access through their PE programme. Most children talk about the impact of PE and sport on improving their health and fitness. The curriculum is enhanced through effective partnership working. For example, older children benefit from partnership working with a wellbeing organisation for young adults in Shetland. They are able to identify activities that support and improve their emotional wellbeing and strategies they can use to manage stress and anxiety.
- The headteacher has effective approaches to monitoring incidents of bullying behaviour. She sought the views of children on behaviour and their experiences of bullying in school. The assembly programme and curriculum offer children helpful opportunities to discuss positive

relationships in school. As a result, most children believe other children behave well. Most children believe the school deals well with bullying.

- The headteacher has identified the need to continue to support a few children to attend school more regularly. She works closely with the family support worker to help families improve identified children's attendance. In addition, the school offers a breakfast club. This supports families to have a more flexible start to the school day. As a result, there are early signs of improved attendance for a few children.
- All children receiving additional support have a child's plan in place. The headteacher effectively coordinates multi-agency support. She is proactive in engaging with other agencies and third sector organisations to meet the complex needs of a few children. As a result, children are included within their mainstream classroom and engage well in their learning.
- Older children are learning about inclusion and equality through their work on global goals. They talk about discrimination and injustice linked to gender equality, poverty and food inequalities. As the school takes forward work on children's rights, teachers should build on this positive start to ensure all children feel confident to challenge discrimination and injustice.
- The headteacher has a strong understanding of the challenges and barriers children may face. As a result, a majority of children access appropriate additional support. All children with potential barriers to learning have interventions and targeted support planned and monitored using child's plans, individual education plans and support passports. This approach to planning additional support ensures all children access appropriate support. Most children with additional support needs are making good progress with their individual targets.
- The headteacher used PEF to fund a family support worker two days per week. The family support worker provides valuable support for children and families in school and at home. Children access one-to-one support and small group supports. Families are supported to access financial support, attend health and education meetings and to establish routines at home. This is strengthening the home school partnership and contributing to improving the wellbeing of children.

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 number of children at each stage varies and is relatively small. Overall statements have been made about attainment and progress to ensure individuals are not identified. A significant number of children across the school have additional support needs. Most children with additional support needs are making satisfactory progress towards individual targets based on prior levels of attainment.
- The majority of children across the school achieve the expected Curriculum for Excellence levels in literacy and numeracy. Teacher professional judgements of children's attainment are not yet sufficiently robust. The headteacher is aware that increased use of National Benchmarks, moderation activity and changes to the current tracking system will support teachers to make increasingly reliable judgements about children's attainment.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, children are making satisfactory progress in listening and talking and reading from their prior levels of attainment. Teachers are engaging in a programme to improve writing. This is impacting positively on children's progress. As a result, most children are making good progress in writing.

Listening and talking

- Across the school, most children listen well to adults and their peers. A few children require support to take turns and listen to others during larger group discussions. Younger children use puppets to retell and create stories during play. As children move through the school, they develop well non-verbal communication skills such as eye-contact and nodding in agreement. Older children have a good vocabulary and are beginning to build on the ideas of others during group discussions. Children need to build progressively on their skills as they move through the school. Older children are ready to develop more complex talking and listening skills such as debating.

Reading

- Across the school children choose books from the school library. They talk about their favourite authors and the type of books they like. Older children are not yet confident in extending this to discuss the author style and genre. Children working at first level read aloud with confidence. They describe characters in their books with increasing confidence. Older children use expression well when reading aloud and self-correct as they read. Children summarise events in the books they are reading. Older children skim and scan the text to find key information. Children answer simple questions about books they are reading. They are not yet confident at identifying and answering different types of questions, for example inferential and evaluative.

Writing

- The youngest children are learning to form letters and numbers. A few children, explore mark making through play. Younger children could be making better progress. They are not yet confident writing independently across a range of genre. As children move through the school, they write with increasing independence for a range of purposes. Children spell known words correctly and use a range of punctuation accurately. A few children require support to improve their handwriting. Older children are enthusiastic about 'free write Friday'. They choose to write comic strips, newspaper articles and books. Children confidently apply their learning in structured writing lessons in their creative pieces. Children write well across the curriculum. Older children create posters to display information from research projects. They use images, bullet points and subheadings well to organise the information.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, children are making satisfactory progress in numeracy and mathematics. It will be important to ensure children have regular opportunities to revisit their learning and apply their skills across the curriculum.

Number, money and measure

- Younger children use one-to-one correspondence to count groups of objects to ten. They use the language of measure to describe and compare objects during play. For example, tall and short, bigger and smaller. As children move through the school they add and subtract three-digit numbers using written methods. They measure objects using centimetres and metres. Older children add and subtract decimal fractions. They are not yet confident in working with fractions and percentages. Across the school children are not yet skilled at articulating and using a range of mental maths strategies.

Shape, position and movement

- Younger children name simple two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects when making junk models. As children move through the school, they talk about the properties of three-dimensional objects however, they are not confident in using the correct mathematic terms for example, faces, edges and vertices. Older children describe and name right, acute and obtuse angles. They are not yet confident in working with complementary or supplementary angles.

Information handling

- Across the school children gather information using surveys. They present data using pictograms, bar charts and line graphs. Older children use technology to create a range of graphs. Children need to develop skills in analysing and interpreting information presented in a range of ways.

Attainment over time

- The headteacher has developed a tracking system to record individual children's progress in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing over time. The current system is too complicated and is impacting on the reliability of teacher judgements.
- Attainment figures over time fluctuate due to ongoing changes in the school roll. Overall, children make satisfactory progress as they move through the school. However, the headteacher is aware children could be making better progress particularly at early and first level. Staff track progress and attainment data for individual children alongside information relating to a range of barriers they may face. As a result, staff are very clear about the socio-economic factors that impact on attainment across the school. Children receive timely support to help them overcome any barriers they face.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Children's achievements in and out with school are valued and celebrated across the school. Children are proud of the bright display showcasing their achievements. They talk positively about receiving certificates for hard work at weekly assemblies. Older children talk confidently about the skills they are developing through their involvement in activities beyond the classroom. The headteacher tracks children's achievements and participation in clubs and activities. Staff are aware of children at risk of missing out.
- Children are valued members of their community. They participate in a range of local events, such as Up Helly Aa, to develop their knowledge and understanding of the heritage of Shetland. Children talk positively about the artwork they created for a local art exhibition. They are very proud of their contribution to the exhibition, and many visited with their families to see their work on display for the public. Children plan a range of events to raise money for local and national charities. They make clear links with their fundraising and their role as global citizens in supporting good causes.

Equity for all learners

- The headteacher initially prioritised addressing children's wellbeing needs using PEF. She made effective use of PEF to employ a family support worker to provide targeted support for identified families. This has impacted positively on attendance and engagement for most children receiving this targeted support. Last session, the headteacher built on this to employ additional pupil support staff. Pupil support staff are working with teachers to deliver targeted literacy and numeracy support for identified children. Children are accessing the support regularly due to improved attendance and are engaging well in individual and small groups supports. There are early signs of this impacting positively on the progress children are making and reducing gaps in attainment. The headteacher should continue to monitor and evaluate the use of PEF with a strong focus on improving outcomes for learners and accelerating progress on closing the attainment gap.

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.