

# Summarised inspection findings

**Tarbat Old Primary School**

The Highland Council

22 August 2023

## Key contextual information

Tarbat Old Primary School is a small, rural school in the village of Portmahomack on the Tarbat Peninsula. There are 35 children on the roll, arranged across two multi-stage composite classes. There is a nursery class located within the school. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, the school has experienced significant periods of instability in leadership due to absence. An acting headteacher has supported the school on a temporary, part time basis since September 2022 then full time since February 2023. The acting headteacher also has leadership responsibility for Hill of Fearn Primary School and Nursery. Further significant changes in staffing are expected at the start of next session due to planned retirements. Almost all children live within Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation decile five. The school does not receive Pupil Equity Funding.

### 1.3 Leadership of change

**satisfactory**

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 acting headteacher provides strong leadership and direction to the school. Despite her short time in post, her clear and aspirational vision for the school is already having a positive impact on school improvement. She has established quickly an accurate understanding of the development needs of the school and is taking appropriate steps to address these. She has done so in partnership with children, teachers and parents. As a result, the acting headteacher is already held in high regard by the school community.
- All teachers understand the social, economic and cultural context of the school well. They use this knowledge effectively to inform all aspects of the school's work. The school's values of teamwork, trust, honesty, respect and being responsible are demonstrated through the quality of relationships across the school. The acting headteacher has rightly identified the need to revisit and refresh the school's vision, values and aims to ensure they reflect the school's current context.
- The acting headteacher has made recent, notable improvements to the systems used to monitor and review the quality of learning and teaching. She has introduced formal observations of learning and she is beginning to monitor curriculum planning against refreshed planning guidance. Following the introduction of termly meetings, the acting headteacher monitors children's progress and attainment on a regular basis. She makes effective use of a new electronic tracking system to support teachers to capture and monitor the data gained from these discussions. Teachers use this data effectively to plan learning and teaching and to identify any gaps in children's learning. Teachers should build on this positive start to ensure that these processes lead to improved outcomes for all children.
- The acting headteacher has correctly identified the need to ensure a coherent approach to self-evaluation. She has prioritised time, across the school year, for teachers to engage in self-evaluation activities. This is beginning to support teachers to engage with self-evaluation frameworks, such as How good is our school (4<sup>th</sup> edition). Teachers should continue to

strengthen their understanding and use of data to ensure it accurately informs school improvement. Teachers should now take a more cohesive approach to school improvement across the school and nursery.

- The acting headteacher's measured approach ensures that the pace of change is appropriate and manageable. Having established a baseline for improvement, she has carefully prioritised the timing of actions being taken. Teachers are engaging well with school improvement activities. As approaches to self-evaluation continue to develop and embed, it is important the acting headteacher ensures regular monitoring of the progress and impact of improvement initiatives
- Teachers benefit from annual professional development and review meetings with the acting headteacher. These meetings inform teachers' own professional learning needs and support the implementation of school improvement priorities. Teachers are beginning to take responsibility for aspects of school improvement, such as numeracy. The acting headteacher should consider how collective responsibility for leadership at all levels can be developed further when planned staffing changes are concluded.
- The majority of children feel that the acting headteacher and staff listen to their views and take these into account. The acting headteacher has taken appropriate action to increase children's involvement in school improvement. Children welcome the recent re-establishment of the pupil council. Children asked for the house system to be re-established. The acting headteacher has implemented this and children's ideas for improving the library have been taken forward. As planned, the acting headteacher should continue to develop children's involvement in self-evaluation activities to include reflecting on their learning experiences.
- Since the acting headteacher took up post, parents feel better informed about their child's progress and the work of the school, due to improved approaches to communication. Parents were enabled to share their views and inform future development priorities at the recent, well-attended 'breakfast and blether' session. The acting headteacher is actively re-establishing community partnership links lost during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## 2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

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

- Children and teachers have developed a supportive and inclusive ethos and culture across the school. They demonstrate respectful and caring relationships towards each other. These relationships are informed by a developing understanding of children's rights. This creates a calm, purposeful learning environment where almost all children feel valued and supported. Most children are motivated and engaged in their learning. Most children feel that teachers support them to become more confident in their learning and they demonstrate resilience when they are faced with a challenge. The acting headteacher has reintroduced pupil leadership groups recently. This is beginning to increase opportunities for children to contribute to the life of the school and wider community.
- Teachers use a variety of teaching approaches well to engage children in learning. Children learn in a range of environments, such as the school grounds and the local environment. In most lessons, children are active participants in their learning. In the majority of lessons, teachers use questioning effectively to check children's understanding and extend their thinking. Most children interact well with each other and have regular opportunities to work individually, in pairs and in small groups. Teachers should develop further learning activities that promote curiosity, creativity and independence. This should support the provision of increased levels of challenge. Teachers should now develop further how they use the local environment and the rich learning potential it provides.
- Teachers make the purpose of learning clear in most lessons. Children have opportunities to reflect on their own work and provide verbal feedback to their peers. All children have personal learning targets in literacy, numeracy, health and wellbeing and one other curriculum area of their choice. As a result, most children talk confidently about their learning. Teachers should continue to develop their use of formative assessment strategies to strengthen further children's understanding of their next steps in learning. They should involve children more fully in identifying how they will know they have been successful in their learning. Teachers use an online application well to enable parents to see examples of their child's learning more regularly. Children should now be supported to take greater ownership of identifying their best work for inclusion in their individual online application and learning profile folder. This should help children see more clearly the progress they are making.
- All children have access to laptop computers and use these successfully to engage in a variety of learning activities set by their teachers. Children use digital technology well to deliver talks, undertake research and evidence their own learning. A few children access learning virtually, by engaging with specialist teaching staff online, such as, a drumming teacher. Teachers should continue to broaden the range and use of technologies further develop children's digital skills in a planned, progressive way.

- Teachers now need to develop a more play-based approach to learning in the younger class. Teachers should engage with professional learning and national practice guidance to inform the development of play-based approaches. Teachers should use this to inform the further development of the learning environment. This should support the provision of high-quality learning experiences that are appropriate to meet children's stage of development and learning needs.
- Teachers undertake a range of assessment approaches in different contexts across the curriculum. The timing of assessment is informed by an agreed, well-judged assessment calendar. Teachers complete baseline assessments for spelling, reading, writing and numeracy against which to measure children's progress. When appropriate, teachers use standardised assessments well to help identify any support needs or specific gaps in children's learning. Each term, children complete a high-quality assessment task linked to specific aspects of learning and skill development. Teachers record literacy and numeracy assessment information effectively on recently introduced electronic trackers. These trackers are clearly linked to Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) experiences and outcomes and National Benchmarks. As a result, teachers' engagement with, and understanding of, National Benchmarks is increasing. Teachers moderate assessments informally within the school. As planned, teachers should engage in more regular moderation activities with colleagues from other schools. This should help teachers to improve their professional judgement against national expectations.
- The acting headteacher recognises that the streamlining and development of approaches to planning for learning are at an early stage of development. She has provided teachers with planning guidance which sets out expectations for effective planning across the school. Teachers now have access to a range of curriculum pathways to inform their planning, including those developed by the associated schools' group and the local authority. Teachers share with parents an overview of what children will be learning each term. This provides a clear summary of medium-term planning across literacy, numeracy, health and wellbeing and other specific areas of study. Teachers seek regularly the views of children to inform the planning process. Teachers plan appropriately for children's age and stage of development across each multi-age and stage class. Teachers take account appropriately of the learning needs of individuals and groups when planning. The acting headteacher should support teachers to develop a more strategic overview of long-term planning. Teachers are beginning to track more robustly children's curriculum experiences across all areas of the curriculum. This should support teachers to ensure that children build on prior learning across all areas of the curriculum as they progress through the school.
- The acting headteacher has introduced regular attainment meetings with class teachers. These meetings provide a manageable process through which children's progress and attainment can be carefully monitored. Teachers are improving the quality of professional dialogue about children's progress through engaging in these meetings. The acting headteacher ensures that any changes in children's progress, gaps in learning and support needs are identified. Teachers use new electronic attainment trackers to help capture and inform these progress meetings well. As this process continues to be embedded, teachers should develop further their use of data to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions to improve outcomes for all learners.

## 2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- The acting headteacher has prioritised the development of more robust approaches to planning. She ensures teachers have access to learning pathways across all areas of the curriculum. Teachers currently use these as points of reference to inform their planning. They should develop further their use of these to ensure there are no gaps in children's learning over time.
- Teachers are beginning to track children's engagement with CfE experiences and outcomes across each curriculum area. As a result, teachers are beginning to develop a clearer understanding of children's learning across the breadth of the curriculum. Teachers should continue to embed their use of data to inform planning. This should support them to ensure children build on prior learning.
- Children engage effectively in a range of learning for sustainability projects. Teachers have engaged well with professional learning to support them to progress this aspect of the curriculum. Teachers display clearly the sustainable development goals in both classrooms and children link these goals with their learning. Teachers embed learning for sustainability appropriately in the learning within each class.
- Teachers plan learning that includes several curriculum areas each term. They identify clearly the experiences and outcomes being delivered. Teachers should develop a clear framework to support this, reflecting children's learning experiences as they progress through the school. This should help teachers to ensure that all children experience learning which builds on their prior knowledge.
- Children demonstrate a range of digital skills well. However, they now need to develop these further. Teachers should make greater use of a digital skills framework to ensure the progressive development of skills.
- All children have regular opportunities to engage in learning outdoors, in the school grounds or in the local environment. The local environment provides rich and diverse learning opportunities that could be further embraced. As teachers develop their approaches to curriculum planning, further consideration should be given to how to use the local environment further.
- Children across the school benefit from two hours of high-quality physical education each week. A visiting specialist teacher and class teachers deliver this.
- Every child learns French appropriate to their age and stage of development. In line with the Scottish Government's 1 + 2 language policy, teachers should ensure that, from P5 to P7, all children learn a second modern language.

## 2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- Parents welcome the positive relationships all staff have with children and themselves. They appreciate the increase in communication about the life and work of the school since the acting headteacher took up post. They say that they are kept well-informed about the work of the school through the online application. Almost all parents feel that the school helps their child to develop their confidence.
- The Parent Council work well with community partners to help raise funds to support the work of the school. Families of children in P7 benefitted from financial support for all children to attend a residential trip with children from the associated schools' group.
- Parents welcomed the opportunity to share their views to support school improvement at the recent 'breakfast and blether' meeting. Almost all parents say that they are confident to approach the acting headteacher should they have any queries or concerns.

## 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

- There is a strong sense of community across the school. Staff and children demonstrate positive, respectful and nurturing relationships. This helps children feel valued, safe and included. Children are kind to each other, resulting in a welcoming, happy atmosphere across the school. Almost all children feel that the school supports them to respect others. Children demonstrate this consistently through their daily interactions, both in the classroom and in the playground.
- Teachers recognise the importance of providing all children with the necessary knowledge and skills to understand their own wellbeing. The acting headteacher and teachers promote the language of wellbeing using the national wellbeing indicators at weekly assemblies. The majority of children speak confidently about what each of the indicators mean and can give examples of how these apply to themselves and others. Children in P3 to P7 have completed a wellbeing survey to establish a baseline measure. Teachers analysed the wellbeing data gathered and identified the need to strengthen further children's ability to talk about their emotions. The acting headteacher has taken appropriate steps to ensure resources are in place to take this forward next session. Teachers should now support P1 and P2 children to reflect on their own wellbeing to enable their needs to be identified too. Teachers should develop further approaches to tracking children's wellbeing over time.
- The acting headteacher has taken positive steps to increase opportunities for children to actively participate in school decision-making. Children speak proudly of their house captain roles and membership of the newly re-instated pupil council. They feel more engaged and involved in the school as a result. For example, house captains planned and delivered an Easter egg hunt for the whole school. This competitive house event brought the school community together, helping to re-establish house teams across year groups. Teachers should continue to build on this very positive start to ensure all children are active participants in decision making.
- Children, across year groups, play well together during their morning break and at lunchtime. They enjoy the freedom to play in the school's large playing field. Staff have a range of play materials which are available for children during breaks, but these are not always readily accessible to children. Staff should now provide greater responsibility to children for distributing the play materials. This would help extend the time children are actively engaged in meaningful play and physical activity.
- As a result of regular training and guidance, all teachers understand and apply the statutory requirements and codes of practice in relation to child protection. There are robust systems and processes in place to support child protection procedures.

- Children's attendance at school is in line with the national average and there have been no exclusions over the past few years. The acting headteacher has established appropriate systems to support children and families should attendance or late coming become a concern.
- Children have regular opportunities to learn about various aspects of health and wellbeing through the curriculum. Children identify a personal learning target for health and wellbeing each term. Younger children demonstrated their understanding of how to maintain good personal hygiene by designing a poster to inform others. Older children can explain with confidence the different food groups and what types of food should be eaten in moderation. Teachers ensure parents are informed about more sensitive areas of the curriculum, such as relationships and sexual health. Teachers should continue to ensure that children experience a health and wellbeing curriculum that supports the progressive development of skills.
- The acting headteacher listens, and takes appropriate action, to address health and wellbeing requests from parents. Parents recently asked for more advice about internet safety. In response, the acting headteacher has arranged a workshop session to be provided for parents before the end of term.
- A visiting specialist teacher and class teachers deliver high quality physical education. Children benefit from direct access to a large, grassed sports field beside the school. Children engage in a range of appropriate activities to build a variety of skills and develop teamwork. This supports and motivates children well when they represent the school to participate in external events, such as football tournaments and Scottish country dance competitions. Children enjoy having their participation and success at these events acknowledged and celebrated. P7 children have increased their practical cycling skills and ability to ride safely on the road by achieving a level two cycling award.
- Children learn about different cultures and religions through the religious and moral education programme. For example, older children can compare the similarities and differences between Christian and Islamic celebrations. They make these comparisons accurately and respectfully. The acting headteacher works in partnership with two local ministers to provide children with regular opportunities for religious observance, both within the school and in the local church.
- Children in P7 benefit from a range of activities that enable them to build relationships with P7 children from associated schools prior to transferring to secondary school. P7 children participated effectively in a developing the young workforce project. They visited a local company, then prepared and delivered a presentation about their visit to the P7 classes from the other schools. Children found this challenging but rewarding. They are looking forward to participating in a residential experience with these peers before they move on to secondary school. This should strengthen further these developing relationships.
- Children are supported well to overcome any barriers to learning. Teachers ensure all children are active participants in classroom activities. Teachers seek the views of individuals appropriately when discussing their needs. Children have access to appropriate dedicated learning spaces, and practical aids specific to their needs. Teachers set clear, measurable targets to support children's learning which are reviewed appropriately. As a result, most children with barriers to learning are making good progress.
- All children benefit from a dedicated library area within the school. The pupil council have provided their suggestions on how to improve the library space. Teachers have conducted an audit of library books to ensure the range of books supports children's health and wellbeing appropriately. They identified the need to increase the range of books provided to reflect the diverse nature of Scotland in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Teachers should continue to involve children in the process to select additional texts.

### 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

- Due to the small size of the school roll, attainment and progress will be expressed in overall statements, rather than for specific year groups or Curriculum for Excellence levels.
- Overall, most children are attaining expected levels of achievement in listening and talking. The majority of children are attaining expected levels of achievement in reading, writing and numeracy. A few children are exceeding expected levels of attainment in literacy. A few children demonstrate the potential to achieve more. Most children are making satisfactory progress in their learning across literacy and numeracy, including those requiring additional support.

#### Attainment in literacy and English

##### Listening and talking

- Across the school most children demonstrate respect for each other when listening and talking in pairs or small group situations. Younger children are beginning to take turns when listening and talking in a variety of contexts. They can identify the main idea of spoken text, with supporting detail. They should develop further their verbal and non-verbal techniques when engaging with others, such as eye contact, expression and body language. Older children can ask and respond to a range of questions to demonstrate their understanding of spoken texts. They understand and can demonstrate the skills required when delivering a presentation to an audience, such as eye contact, pace and tone. Across all stages, children should develop further their note-taking skills and use these to create new texts for a range of purposes.

##### Reading

- Younger children can hear and say sounds made by a combination of letters. They can ask and answer questions about events and ideas in texts. As children progress through the school, a few children need to develop their skills in reading with increasing fluency and expression. Children's independence in finding key information from a range of texts should be further developed. Older children can compare text with film and express their preference and the reasons for it. They can create different types of questions to show understanding of text. Children would benefit from extending the range of texts and genres they read.

##### Writing

- Teachers now need to increase children's attainment in writing. Teachers are implementing a consistent approach to develop writing skills across the school to address this. There are early indications that teachers' implementation of this consistent approach is beginning to improve the quality of children's writing. Most children are now writing at greater length. Teachers

should ensure that children have sufficient opportunities to develop their writing skills across a range of genres.

- Across the school, children present their work neatly and appropriately to the task. As children progress through the school, they write with increasing fluency and legibility. Children use a range of punctuation appropriate to their age and stage with increasing accuracy. Younger children should be supported to improve the accuracy of letter formation. They would benefit from increased opportunities to write in imaginary and real-life situations through play.

## **Numeracy and mathematics**

### **Number, money and measure**

- Across the school, the majority of children are confident in their ability to measure using non-standard and standard units of measurement. Children can select and use the appropriate tool to measure a particular object. They understand different units of measurement, including volume and weight. Younger children can add and subtract within 10 and can identify the number before and after in a sequence. Children are less confident in their recall of multiplication tables. They should strengthen further their understanding of place value. Older children can apply their understanding of fractions to identify the relationships between fractions, decimals and percentages with increasing accuracy. Children should develop further their application of these skills in real-life situations.

### **Shape, position and movement**

- The majority of children can identify and recognise a range of two-dimensional shapes accurately. They are less confident describing the properties of three-dimensional objects. Older children use the correct mathematical language to investigate and classify angles. Children should continue to develop their skills in using digital technologies and mathematical instruments to draw two-dimensional shapes and representations of three-dimensional objects.

### **Information handling**

- Across the school, children demonstrate the application of information handling skills, appropriate to their age and stage, in other areas of the curriculum. Younger children can use a Venn diagram effectively. For example, they categorised the properties of species in science. Older children can collect data appropriately for a given task and display it accurately in a graph. They can analyse information from a pie chart. Children should continue to develop their information handling skills using digital technologies.

### **Attainment over time**

- The acting headteacher introduced tracking procedures that evidence children's progress and attainment over time. She has recently introduced an effective tracking system which should support teachers to ensure that each child makes the best possible progress. It is too early in its implementation to provide meaningful data about children's attainment over time.
- The acting headteacher and teachers need to gather more robust data about children's progress at P2, P3, P5 and P6. They have appropriate plans in place to use standardised assessment and professional judgements to provide this next session.

### **Overall quality of learners' achievements**

- Teachers ensure that children's wider achievements are recognised and celebrated during class discussions, at assemblies and using an online application. For example, they use the 'warm, fuzzy' wall display to support older children to share and celebrate their achievements. Teachers are not yet tracking children's participation and skills development through wider achievement activities. The acting headteacher should introduce a tracking system for this

purpose. This should support teachers to identify and address the needs of children at risk of missing out.

- A few children are members of a local schools' orchestra and have participated in public performances, developing their performance and musicianship skills. Children particularly enjoy competing in inter-school events, such as football tournaments, a swimming gala and country dancing competitions. Teachers develop children's skills well in preparation for their participation in these events. Parents welcome the reintroduction of involvement in activities with other schools following the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Equity for all learners**

- Teachers are aware of the cost-of-living crisis and the potential impact this has on children's ability to engage in learning activities. They use their knowledge of children and families appropriately to address any barriers to participation. This includes making school uniform available and running a Christmas jumper swap shop. In partnership with the wider community and local businesses, a fun day was held at the beach on Easter Sunday to raise funds for the school. The money raised is enabling the P7 cohort to participate in an associated schools' group P7 residential experience. It is also subsidising a whole school wildlife centre outing. The acting headteacher should continue to develop approaches to ensure equity for all learners, including reviewing the cost of the school day.

## 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.