

Summarised inspection findings

Alves Primary School

Moray Council

14 July 2020

Key contextual information

Alves Primary School is a small, rural school located in the village of Alves, five miles from Elgin. Children attend from the village of Alves and the surrounding areas. At the time of the inspection, there were 74 children on the school roll. The children are organised across four composite classes. The headteacher has been in post for 10 years.

1.3 Leadership of change

very 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 school's aspirational vision and shared values are clearly visible in day-to-day practice. The slogan, 'Alves is ACE' (ambition, confidence and empathy), sums up the school's aims well. The vision of inspiring everyone to aim high and be their best self is a key driver in the school's improvement journey. The headteacher and pupil council review regularly the vision, values and aims with stakeholders to ensure they remain relevant to children, families and the wider school community. Staff make clear links between the school's values and children's rights. Children understand how this helps them to develop as confident, responsible individuals who contribute to their school and community. Children enjoy positive, respectful relationships with staff and each other. There is a strong sense of 'family' within the school community.
- The headteacher is enthusiastic and passionate about learning and teaching. He promotes an outward-looking approach as he strives for continuous improvement. His relentless focus on research-informed practice is having a positive impact on children's attainment and achievement across the school. The headteacher values greatly professional learning and the positive impact this has on school improvement. He encourages staff to engage with current thinking, national guidance and effective pedagogical approaches to improve learning, teaching and assessment. Officers from the local authority work well with the headteacher and staff to ensure the overall quality of learning and teaching is of a high standard. Teachers are empowered to be leaders of learning in their own classrooms and collaboratively across the school. All staff benefit from the annual professional review and development process. As a result, professional learning links clearly to individual needs and school improvement priorities. The headteacher promotes practitioner enquiry and supports all staff to engage in critical reflection of their practice. He ensures that the pace of change is effective and manageable.
- Effective self-evaluation processes are in place, with a clear calendar of activity and engagement for staff and children. Staff use the challenge questions within 'How Good is Our School? (4th edition)' to support critical reflection of the work of the school. A range of evidence, including quantitative and qualitative data, informs the identification of areas for improvement. The school improvement plan has clear actions which include realistic timescales and regular, planned review of the progress made. There is evidence over time of improvement priorities having a positive impact on areas such as attainment, approaches to nurture and curriculum development.

- There is a strong sense of teamwork and support amongst all staff. Teachers work collaboratively and share learning and professional reading with each other. There are regular opportunities for professional dialogue about practice and how to maximise outcomes for children using the teacher learning community (TLC) approach. Teachers carry out peer observations, identifying strengths in each other's practice and potential areas for development. This supports everyone to improve. Staff are keen to engage with colleagues across the associated schools group in their drive for continual improvement. They should continue to pursue opportunities to collaborate with other schools.
- Staff feel empowered to lead development in areas of the curriculum and on school improvement priorities. Teachers lead in areas such as approaches to emerging literacy, the use of digital technology to enhance learning, teaching and assessment, and the identification of interventions to raise attainment. There is a climate of trust and honesty within the school team and staff feel comfortable making suggestions, challenging each other or raising concerns. The headteacher encourages staff to be solution-focused and bring ideas for discussion where they identify improvements could be made.
- Learner participation is a strong feature of Alves Primary. All children are members of one of the school's 'business groups' which link to key areas of school improvement. For example, the UNA group (United Nations of Alves) focus on children's rights and is currently working towards gold accreditation as part of a national scheme. Staff support these groups and act as facilitators allowing children to take the lead. These groups have a clear structure and remit, and children devise action plans accordingly. They develop a range of skills through their participation in these groups. Older children talk about the importance of communication, leadership and organisational skills in the successful running of their 'business groups'. The headteacher recognises that this approach could be adapted further. This is to ensure children develop skills progressively across the school in line with the Moray skills framework.
- The headteacher consults parents and informs them of improvement plans and ongoing developments. The Parent Council actively support the work of the school and communicates key messages to engage the wider parent body. Recent changes to the school's relationships and sexual health programme involved parents as part of a working group to review national guidance and resources. Their collective work with staff ensures that the school's approaches are in line with current advice and the changing nature of families and society. The headteacher should continue to seek ways to involve all parents in self-evaluation and improvement planning.
- All staff know children and their families very well. They have a good awareness of the social, cultural and economic context of their community and use this knowledge well to inform their practice and improvement plans. The Pupil Equity Fund provides increased staffing to enhance support for individuals in literacy and numeracy, and to improve children's health and wellbeing and emotional resilience. Children demonstrate improved progress as a result of the well-planned, targeted interventions.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

very good

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

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

- At all stages, children are highly motivated and engage enthusiastically in quality learning experiences, including when outdoors. They are caring and considerate learners who give readily of their time to help their peers. They work very well on their own, in pairs and in small groups. They often self and peer assess their work, identifying what they have achieved and what they need to learn. They enjoy working out solutions to challenges which teachers set regularly. A few children need to develop further their confidence when learning with others. Most children are clear about the purpose of their learning. A few are capable of greater challenge in their learning. Children appreciate that teachers take account of their interests and that they make important choices and decisions about their learning. Children are acquiring key life skills through engaging in a broad range of experiences. They are developing resilience, as well as an ability to problem solve, through working with others.
- Children's views and opinions influence their learning. Almost all are developing enquiring minds and use digital technologies well. At the early stages, younger children make sense of the world around them and consolidate key aspects of their learning through quality play experiences. At the middle stages, children use their knowledge and skills well to enable others to learn and achieve success, for example, when reading. At the upper stages, children learn important roles when working in groups, for example, as 'resourcers, includers, organisers and reporters'. Across the school, almost all children are eager learners. They lead aspects of their own learning through their specific remits in the 'business groups'. Children are creative and work very well in teams, including through their involvement in various activities and clubs, which take place within and outwith the school day. A significant minority of children, including those who face challenges, learn well through support from other children and staff. Across the school, a few children need to continue to persevere and develop their self-confidence in aspects of their learning when working independently. Others need to continue to apply their learning across different curricular areas to ensure they experience breadth and depth of understanding.
- Overall, all teachers deliver interesting, well-organised and at times innovative lessons that engage and further children's attainment and achievement. They are positive role models who often use humour and fun appropriately to engage children in lessons. Teaching and support staff work very well together to achieve very good outcomes for children. Teachers deliver very effective lessons that are broken down into appropriate segments of learning. As a result, lessons are well-paced and this enables children to make appropriate progress in line with age and stage of development. Across the school, teachers' use of digital technologies enriches children's knowledge and understanding in different aspects of their learning. Teachers involve children very well in lessons and promote learner participation. They share the purpose of learning and make sure that children know how they will achieve success. As a result, children are very aware of what they do well and areas to improve. Most teachers use questions well to check children's understanding and extend their learning. In a few lessons, teachers need to

develop their use of questions to assess what children know and aid their learning. Most teachers give children helpful feedback that supports them to assess and recognise their strengths and areas to improve. Teachers enhance children's learning further through using fully the school facilities, including the outdoor classroom. Positive relationships and the school's standing in the local community, have resulted in partners and local businesses helping to broaden children's learning. Children are developing a very good knowledge and understanding of the world of work.

- Across the school, promoted and led effectively by the headteacher, staff engage in high quality professional learning and development. This is having a significant impact on what they teach, how they plan children's learning and the approaches they use to deliver experiences for children. Staff use relevant research findings to provide children with the best approaches to match children's individual preferences and styles. This helps secure their progress. Staff use digital technology to share research and effective practice with each other but also to share articles and relevant information in response to challenges that they face in school. This is a key strength of the school.
- Overall, teachers use assessment information well to inform and plan children's learning. Teachers are becoming increasingly confident in assessing children's progress through well-embedded moderation activities within school. Overall, their professional judgements are reliable. In order to broaden the scale of their moderation, they need to continue to develop links outwith the school. They should continue to explore opportunities to work with colleagues from the Forres Academy associated schools' group and beyond. In a few lessons, staff need to improve how they use assessment information to plan greater challenge for those children who are capable of more demanding learning experiences.
- The headteacher, together with staff, has established relevant systems to track, monitor and assess children's learning. Assessment is central to, and influences appropriately, the school's approaches to learning and teaching. Teachers discuss regularly children's progress in literacy and English, numeracy and mathematics and health and wellbeing. Together with staff, the headteacher has embedded useful formative and summative approaches within learning and teaching which supports children's progress. They use the relevant information gathered to plan and deliver highly-effective learning experiences for all children.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- Staff make use of Northern Alliance progression pathways for literacy and numeracy. They work together to enhance these, ensuring a clear understanding of the building blocks necessary to develop children's skills. There should be regular opportunities within the learning pathways for children to recall knowledge and skills across all organisers, not just number, money and measure.
- There are curriculum frameworks in place for all other areas of the curriculum. These provide breadth across Curriculum for Excellence experiences and outcomes and link to the relevant National Benchmarks and key aspects of learning. Whilst there may be coverage, children do not always experience progressive learning in each curricular area. For example, in expressive arts, particularly music. The headteacher and staff should continue to develop the curriculum to ensure children receive their entitlement to progressive learning across all curricular areas.
- The curriculum framework provides flexibility so that children's interests, the local area, current affairs and world events can shape planning for interdisciplinary learning. Staff should review the balance of the curriculum in their plans and consider the delivery of literacy and numeracy across other curricular areas. Whilst there is a curriculum framework in place for religious and moral education, children are not confident in their knowledge and awareness of the beliefs and customs of other world religions.
- The school has plans in place to deliver 1+2 modern languages, with all children learning French across the school. The second language offered is German, in line with Forres Academy associated schools' group.
- Staff refer to Moray Council's skills framework. They should work on developing a progressive skills framework, in line with the 'Careers Education Standard', to support children to recognise the skills they are developing.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- Parents feel that their children enjoy school, are included and treated with fairness. They receive helpful information on their children's learning and progress, including through the use of social media. Parents are pleased with the range of experiences and activities from which their children learn. They appreciate the different clubs that their children participate in and benefit from. Parents are very positive about the headteacher's leadership and his approaches to involving them in the life of the school. They have helpful opportunities to learn together with their children at home but also in class. Parents can also access useful sessions and workshops in school to support them with their children if needed.
- Parents have many opportunities to be involved in school life. They volunteer regularly in school, supporting activities, trips and events. Staff value parents' contribution to their children's learning experiences in school. They seek parents' views and act on these where possible. Staff provide helpful information to parents about their children's experiences. They recognise that there is scope to continue to find ways to engage parents more, including those who find it challenging to come to school for various reasons.

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

very 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

- Alves Primary offers an inclusive and nurturing learning environment for children. Positive, respectful relationships, underpinned by the school's values of respect, teamwork, caring and enthusiasm, are evident between staff, children and their peers. There is a strong sense of 'belonging' amongst the school community. As a result, children feel that they are encouraged and supported well to achieve and that staff genuinely care for them. Almost all children indicate that they feel safe at school and know they have a trusted adult they can talk to if they have any worries or concerns. All staff model kind, considerate behaviours in their interactions. Staff seek, welcome and value children's ideas and opinions. Children's wellbeing is a key feature of the work of the school and embedded in approaches to learning, teaching and the wider life of the school.
- Children, staff and parents share an understanding of how children are safe, included and encouraged to be healthy in school. Staff promote the importance of maintaining good health in relation to children's development and progress. Children develop a progressive understanding of their own and others' wellbeing as they move through the school. They describe confidently the actions they can take to keep themselves safe and improve their own health. For example, at the early stages, children talk about the importance of careful handwashing to keep themselves safe from infection, whilst older children have a clear understanding of how to stay safe online. As a result of the school's approaches to developing resilience and promoting emotional wellbeing, children are becoming more confident. Most children embrace challenge knowing that mistakes can help them to learn. Children reflect on their progress using the wellbeing indicators. They understand how the indicators link with children's rights and how this helps them to ensure their actions support an inclusive ethos at school. They understand very well that all children are unique individuals with different strengths and talents, who require different things to help them to be successful.
- Staff promote health and fitness effectively across the school. Staff work well with children to promote healthy actions for their future. Children develop a very good understanding of the importance of food and nutrition. They increase their knowledge and understanding of the food grown and available locally through their topic on Moray's Larder. Children know the importance of maintaining a healthy, active lifestyle and the impact outdoor activity can have on their mental, social, emotional and physical wellbeing. This enables most children to develop positive attitudes to healthy living and make good choices to pursue a healthy lifestyle. They embrace the wide range of activities and taster sessions on offer. This has broadened their knowledge of and interest in sports and outdoor pursuits such as fishing, orienteering and ice hockey. Already, a few children perform at high levels in sport and have a good basis for preparing for lifelong activity and careers in health and leisure.
- All staff have a very good understanding of their responsibilities and statutory duties in improving outcomes for children and ensuring their safety and wellbeing. They undertake

relevant professional learning as required. The headteacher and support for learning (SfL) teacher provide up-to-date information and policy guidance to all staff in relation to children's welfare, inclusion and equality. This supports staff to be vigilant and responsive to children's needs and changing circumstances. Staff take appropriate and prompt action where concerns arise. A few children and parents report that they have concerns about the ease of access to the road via the playground gate and the safety implications of this. Together with the local authority, the school should continue to review safety arrangements with regards to the road and heavy traffic to ensure children's safety at all times.

- The SfL teacher uses her knowledge of children and families to ensure children who may have barriers to learning receive the most appropriate support. This helps them make good progress. She has very positive relationships with families and partners which support and improve children's outcomes. The headteacher deploys support staff effectively. Support staff work closely with the SfL teacher to deliver interventions which have a positive impact on outcomes for identified children. For example, the breakfast club provides an opportunity for daily emotional check-ins with children. This supports children very well in their readiness to learn. The SfL teacher monitors the progress of children requiring additional support. Working with colleagues, she reviews regularly the impact of identified strategies and interventions to ensure children are making good progress. Individualised education programmes and learning profile strategies identify and record appropriate targets for children requiring additional support. Parents and children are involved fully in the development of these plans and in reviewing children's progress. As a result of all of these measures, all children who require additional support are making progress against their own targets, with most demonstrating improved attainment in literacy and numeracy.
- The school's recently reviewed health and wellbeing programme supports children to explore diversity and develop a very good understanding of equality and inclusion. School assemblies and the work of the 'business groups' provide further opportunities to promote and celebrate diversity. Children believe they would recognise discrimination and prejudice and have the confidence to question and challenge such behaviours. In order to support children's knowledge of diversity, staff should continue to develop their understanding of beliefs and cultures around the world.
- Equality and inclusion approaches are a key feature of the work of the school. All children are included, engaged and involved in learning and the wider life of the school community. The headteacher, in consultation with staff and parents, makes well-judged decisions to ensure that all children can participate in the school's programme of activities within and outwith school. This provides a positive benefit to children's health and wellbeing through everyone being included.

3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

very good

This indicator focuses on the school's success in achieving the best possible outcomes for all learners. Success is measured in attainment across all areas of the curriculum and through the school's ability to demonstrate learners' achievements in relation to skills and attributes. Continuous improvement or sustained high standards over time is a key feature of this indicator. The themes are:

- attainment in literacy and numeracy
- attainment over time
- overall quality of learners' achievement
- equity for all learners

- On account of the small number of children at each stage, it is not always possible to quantify performance to avoid identifying individual children. Children's attainment in literacy and English language is very good. In numeracy and mathematics, children's attainment is good.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Almost all children attain very well. Most attain expected Curriculum for Excellence levels. Those not attaining as expected, make very good progress against their own personal targets.

Listening and talking

- Almost all children make very good progress in listening and talking. They are confident and articulate when speaking to each other, staff and visitors. At all levels, most listen attentively and put forward carefully thought out answers in response to questions from and discussions with peers and adults. Children use their listening skills well to analyse key information when watching videos and to share key facts. Most use listening and talking skills effectively to give peers helpful feedback on their work. A few are not yet confident when speaking aloud in front of others. A few of the younger children need to continue to improve their listening skills. At times, they speak over each other and their teacher.

Reading

- Most children make very good progress in reading. Across the school, almost all children enjoy reading. Most use their skills in analysing and evaluating to make informed comments on texts they have read. Most talk enthusiastically about favourite books and authors. They are confident in reading aloud in front of their peers. At early level, most use helpful strategies to read for different purposes. Across the school, almost all children understand or are developing their knowledge of key features of texts and the various techniques used by authors. Most are competent in applying their reading skills across different aspects of their learning. Children use questions appropriately to help them understand texts and link what they are learning with what they already know. Across the school, a few children need to continue to develop their skills in reading.

Writing

- Most children make very good progress in writing. They write very well for a range of purposes. At early level, they enjoy being authors as they create simple books. Younger children can sequence ideas into stories in a logical way. They often use illustrations to enhance their writing. They are developing their skills as storytellers who create short stories to share with audiences through role-play. They present their work very well. Most use punctuation appropriately to structure their writing and emphasise key words for effect. A few do not use punctuation well to organise their writing. Children are developing important skills in editing to improve their writing as they identify and correct spelling errors. Across the school, children need to write at length more regularly across different areas of their learning. Most children

who are not attaining expected levels are making good progress in achieving their personal writing targets.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Most children make good progress in numeracy and mathematics. Those who are not attaining expected national standards, are making good progress in achieving their individual targets.

Number, money and measure

- Across the school, most children make good progress in number, money and measure. At early level, they enjoy solving problems using concrete materials and ordering and sequencing. Across the school, most children count with accuracy. They have a sound knowledge and understanding of money. At first and second levels, they are becoming competent in converting simple fractions to decimals. By P7, most children use table facts accurately to solve problems involving addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. They need to continue to practise their skills in mental agility. Increasingly, children understand how to connect multiplication and division to support their calculations. They know how to convert fractions and percentages. Children are developing their skills in problem solving and use strategies to work out answers to solutions. They negotiate and estimate using proper measuring devices and record accurately using different units of measurement.

Shape, position and movement

- Across the school, most children use their knowledge and understanding of two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects appropriately to solve problems. Most who have achieved first level draw and name some angles with accuracy. At second level, children know and apply with confidence and accuracy the eight compass points. Across the school, children need further and regular practice to help them to apply and consolidate their knowledge of shape, position and movement.

Information handling

- Across the school, children are developing their skills in gathering, recording and displaying information. They often carry out surveys where they record information gathered using tally marks. They present information clearly and competently using bar charts. By P7, not all children are secure in their knowledge of different charts and graphs. Across the school, children need to develop further their skills in information handling. They need to make greater use of technology to collect, organise and display data, selecting the most appropriate format across different aspects of their learning.

Attainment over time

- Over the past three years, children's attainment has improved steadily in literacy and English, numeracy and mathematics and in health and wellbeing. Those children not attaining expected Curriculum for Excellence levels are making good progress towards achieving their personal learning targets. Overall, most children attain well in most curricular areas. Together with staff, the headteacher has established systems to ensure an accurate overview of children's progress in other areas. The headteacher should continue to refine these systems to ensure all children continue to attain appropriately across all curricular areas.

Overall quality of learners' achievement

- Children's skills and teamwork, particularly in regard to skills for learning, life and work are recognised and celebrated. Children are confident, articulate, creative and achieve in various ways. They have positive attitudes and take responsibility for helping others to succeed. Children achieve well in various ways, and through taking part in various challenges and local and national competitions where they have been highly successful. They are active citizens, caring for their community and others in it, including elderly and vulnerable citizens. Children know the importance of sustainability. They are developing relevant leadership skills through

taking on significant lead roles on various business groups and committees that make a difference. Their leadership, physical education, sporting skills and wellbeing are enabling them to achieve through sporting and cultural partnerships. Children recognise their effective contribution to school and those associated with it. Together with staff, the headteacher should continue to track children's achievements to ensure equity of opportunity that results in no child missing out on being successful.

Equity for all learners

- Almost all children, including those who face significant challenges in their learning, attain well. Particular children have improved their attendance and attainment through the headteacher's effective use of the Pupil Equity Fund. As a result, their attainment in aspects of literacy and English, numeracy and mathematics and health and wellbeing, particularly their emotional wellbeing, has improved. Staff should continue to be proactive in responding to children's needs and circumstances to ensure that all children continue to attain and make the progress of which they are capable.

School Empowerment

■ Curriculum and leadership of learning

- The school's values and aims underpin effectively a culture of learning and high aspirations for all. The headteacher promotes staff autonomy and encourages critical reflection of practice. Staff work within a culture which is consultative, collaborative and collegiate. The supportive climate of trust and professional responsibility provides an effective backdrop for high-quality professional dialogue. Staff engage enthusiastically in professional learning and current research to identify effective approaches to curriculum development and high quality learning, teaching and assessment. They feel empowered to question and challenge each other and critically engage with research. Staff are developing the confidence to initiate and lead change. They understand the need for evidence to inform school improvement. They work together to develop detailed curriculum pathways and agree expectations of high quality learning and teaching. Teachers embrace opportunities to work with colleagues from other schools and are keen to lead developments across their associated schools group.

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.