

# Summarised inspection findings

**Papa Westray Community School**

Orkney Islands Council

25 June 2024

## Key contextual information

Papa Westray Community School and nursery class serves the island of Papa Westray, one of the most northerly islands of Orkney. At the time of the inspection, there are six children attending the school, ranging from P1-P6. They are taught together in a single multi-stage class. Families can move to the island for varying periods of time. This means the school roll is changeable, even within an academic session. The school comprises of one classroom, a spacious hall and outdoor areas used for learning and play. The acting headteacher has overall responsibility for both the school and nursery class and teaches the primary class three and a half days per week. A part-time teacher, local authority itinerant teachers and support staff work closely with the acting headteacher. Securing a permanent headteacher for the school has been particularly challenging. As a result, in recent years there have been several changes in the school's leadership.

### 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

- Papa Westray Community School is a welcoming, inclusive school. All staff, families and the island community work together very well to provide nurturing, creative approaches across the school. This supports all children to flourish. Working closely with the previous substantive headteacher, staff, children and families discussed and agreed a shared vision, values and aims for the school. These provided guidance and a shared language to support the school's ethos and children's learning at this time. As planned, the vision, values and aims should be reviewed next session. Staff, children and parents should ensure they are bespoke to the Papay community and capture their unique island school.
- The acting headteacher took up post in October 2023 and brought much needed stability to the school. She worked very closely with staff, children, families and the community to build positive relationships. She is proactive in learning about the school's context and participating in island life. Parents and community members value this meaningful connection and her supportive and positive approach. The acting headteacher is assisted well by a part-time teacher, itinerant teachers, support staff, partners and local authority staff. Together, they have successfully developed a collaborative and supportive culture, while leading the school through a significant journey of change.
- The acting headteacher quickly identified the strengths of the school and used a range of evidence well to prioritise the most appropriate areas for development. This included adapting the school improvement plan to better reflect the needs of the school at that time. She has carefully managed pace of change addressing previous constraints on achieving well-paced improvement. The school's roll has recently had an increased number of younger children. As a result, the acting headteacher, nursery practitioner and other staff have worked together very well to adapt and develop the school environments and teaching approaches. This work means children are now more independent and creative within a high-quality learning environment. Staff reflect on the success of improvement work and interventions, such as support for writing.

They have explored recording this using a floorbook approach. Staff should build on this positive foundation. The new headteacher should carefully select, plan and evaluate key priorities for next session working closely with nursery and local authority staff. This will help to ensure coherence and continue the close partnership across the school and nursery. The new headteacher should also consider meaningful ways to engage parents and partners in planning and evaluating school improvement.

- Working together, teachers discussed and agreed essential features of effective teaching and learning. They use this agreement well to reflect and evaluate their practice on an ongoing basis. This is helping to embed consistent, high-quality features in classroom practice. The acting headteacher is developing quality assurance arrangements, including more regular and rigorous evaluation activities. She samples children's work and the planning of other teaching staff. These approaches should be further developed and embedded into a regular cycle of school improvement planning.
- The acting headteacher and staff have a sound understanding of the school's social, economic, and cultural context and of the needs of individual children. They use this information well to target improvements and inform the curriculum. The school does not receive any Pupil Equity Funding. The acting headteacher has focused on developing a structured approach to raise attainment and accelerate children's progress in key areas of learning, such as writing. Whilst changes in pedagogy are still being embedded, there are clear signs of improvement. Staff should now evaluate the impact of interventions and raising attainment work more robustly. This will help them to understand what is supporting the improvements in children's outcomes.
- Staff feel supported and encouraged by the acting headteacher to take forward further professional learning. For example, a staff focus on developing approaches to support phonics learning has had a positive impact on the confidence and progress of all children. The acting headteacher has introduced 'Papay Thing' for children. This is based on the Old Norse concept of a meeting where open discussions were held and decisions taken. This is an authentic local cultural reference that children embrace. With adult support, children are becoming more confident identifying aspects of school life they would like to improve, such as gathering loose materials for using and playing in the outdoor spaces. They feel their views are heard as they vote to choose where to play outdoors or which story to read. Staff should continue to support children to take the lead in their school and participate in further decision-making.

## 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 are attentive and motivated during all lessons. They cooperate very well in pairs and as a class. Children show a positive attitude to learning and engage well in experiences across the curriculum. They are confident to share their learning, opinions and ideas with their peers, the island community and visitors. The acting headteacher and staff have created an engaging, supportive classroom environment. Resources, craft items, natural materials, a wide range of writing tools and support materials are now available to children at all times. They make effective use of these to support their learning during play and discovery experiences.
- During lessons, all staff give clear instructions. The acting headteacher has introduced helpful approaches that are supporting children to understand better the purpose of their learning. She has developed 'Papay Pride' as a way to illustrate high expectations and written presentation standards with children. This has had a positive impact improving children's pace, presentation of work and their willingness to engage in more challenging learning.
- Across the curriculum, teachers plan and provide individually tailored tasks and activities that help children to engage with learning at the right level. All staff use effective questioning to check for understanding, recall prior learning and promote curiosity. This supports children to build on their prior knowledge. Teachers should continue to develop their approaches to questioning to promote children's higher order thinking skills and extend the level of challenge as children progress with their learning.
- Teachers make effective use of the island environment as a meaningful context for learning. They provide engaging opportunities for children to learn outdoors in the playground, the market garden and the island's historical sites. Children develop knowledge and transferable skills when visiting and learning in places, such as the pier and beach. The acting headteacher re-established 'Papay boxes' to engage children in learning about the wider world and tourism on their island. Through this project, children place special boxes at key spots around the island where visitors leave notes for the children to read. Back in class, children plot where the visitors were from on the world map and learn about their countries. As planned, teachers should continue to develop a progressive approach to supporting children's outdoor learning and transferable skills.
- Partnerships are used effectively to deliver and support engaging learning experiences. The acting headteacher arranges for visitors working on the island to speak to the children about their job, the skills they use and to involve children in related activities. For example, Royal Society of the Protection of Birds (RSPB) staff, plumbers, emergency services staff and other experts. This enhances children knowledge and raises their awareness of the world of work. Teachers should continue to build on this positive practice to develop children's understanding and skills for life, learning and work using national guidance. As part of this work, children

should be supported to make connections across their curricular learning and identify their own skills.

- Support staff use their skills and experiences to support children very well with their learning and wellbeing. They provide valuable support, questioning and well-considered commentary which help children to revisit and practise key skills, particularly in reading and numeracy. This supports children to engage fully and progress in their learning.
- Teachers make effective use of digital technologies to support children's learning, for example, through photography and matrix barcodes in the library space. Children use the interactive whiteboard and digital games with ease. This supports independence and motivation. Staff should support children to build and apply their digital skills across the curriculum and creative activities.
- This session, the acting headteacher is developing the use of play and open-ended challenge to enhance children's learning. She has created stimulating spaces that support independent, play-based experiences and encourage children's creativity. Children have opportunities for choice and show sustained interest across a range of discovery activities. Nursery and primary children play and learn together regularly through planned sessions. For example, nursery and primary children learned about Orkney wildlife through a joint project and regularly play together during 'plan, do, review' events. Staff use these experiences well to develop coherent approaches across nursery and early primary stages. Teachers should continue to develop further their understanding and approaches to play, taking account of national practice guidance. This will help to support children to build progressively on their skills and experiences through Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) early and first levels.
- Teachers use a range of assessment approaches well, including standardised assessments, to measure children's progress. They use information from these effectively to inform future planned learning. Staff should now consider how children could demonstrate the breadth and depth of their learning across a range of contexts. Children receive helpful written and verbal feedback about their learning. The acting headteacher shares effectively with children how to be successful in their learning. Previously, children have selected and recorded their own personal targets. These approaches are supporting them to reflect on how well they are doing in their learning. Teachers should build on and embed this practice. They should support children to take the lead in target setting and to identify measures of success during lessons. This will help children to take further ownership of their learning in an individual and meaningful way.
- Teachers plan effectively in almost all curricular areas. They use CfE experiences and outcomes and national Benchmarks well to plan and track children's learning. Teachers seek and make use of children's opinions and ideas when planning across social subjects. This gives children a sense of ownership and time to explore their interests. Teachers should continue to develop the balance between responsive and intentional planned learning. This will ensure that they deliberately provide and extend aspects of the curriculum to help children achieve specific CfE experiences and outcomes.
- Changes in leadership and remote location mean that opportunities for staff to participate in meaningful regular moderation have been limited. There are current plans for local authority moderation events as the acting headteacher and local authority officers recognise it is important for all staff to have opportunities to meet with colleagues in other schools. This will support staff to continue to develop their shared understanding of national standards.

## 2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- Teachers use pathways to plan experiences for children for literacy and numeracy, and most other curricular areas. Rolling programmes have previously been created to ensure children receive broad coverage of all subjects within CfE. However, a few of the identified themes are now not as relevant to the school's current context. Teachers should continue to review and develop further progressive learning pathways across the curriculum.
- Itinerant teachers work well in partnership with the acting headteacher to support and enhance the expressive arts curriculum for children. They make effective use of the local environment and culture, as well as inspiration from the wider world, during lessons and experiences. For example, children studied the North Isles landscapes and created tapestries inspired by them. They also explore music and sing songs featuring different languages. These approaches are nurturing children's appreciation for the arts.
- Children receive their entitlement to high-quality physical education (PE). Currently, they receive swimming tuition on the island of Westray and a specialist dance instructor visits the school weekly. Staff make effective use of both indoor and outdoor spaces to deliver a relevant and progressive programme of PE for children.
- Teachers provide planned, progressive lessons and experiences for French and Scots which help children to build on prior learning. A volunteer regularly supports children to learn and speak German. Children are particularly attuned to hearing and speaking multiple languages and enjoy this type of learning.
- As a result of the very small school roll, arrangements to support children as they move into P1 and from P7 to S1 are bespoke to each individual. The acting headteacher and staff ensure regular partnership with the nursery and school children, with other 'peedie' (small) island schools and two secondary schools. Visits and joint experiences help children feel more confident before any move. The acting headteacher has planned and arranged for children to experience science activities and activities with a secondary specialist teacher on mainland Orkney. Parents appreciate the support their children receive before and during changes and feel this helps them to settle well.

## 2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- The acting headteacher and staff value parents as key partners in the life of the school. All parents feel that staff communicate with them very well. They say they are well-informed about their children's learning and progress. Staff support this through discussions, regular use of an online learning platform and by providing curricular newsletters.
- Parents and the island community welcome and embrace the range of ways to engage with the school. Events such as fairs, performances and 'stay and learn' events are always very well attended. The acting headteacher offers regular ways for parents to share their views and acts upon suggestions. For example, arranging for further swimming lessons for children.
- The Parent Council works very well in partnership with the acting headteacher and staff to support the work and life of the school. They discuss areas of school improvement with staff. They provide their time, expertise and funding. This is supporting and enhancing children's learning experiences.



## 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

- Adults' shared commitment to nurturing approaches and children's rights underpins daily life, teaching and learning. All staff build and sustain caring and respectful relationships with children. As children often join the school at varying points in the academic session or at different stages, staff plan and provide tailored support, encouragement and reassurance very well. As a result, children feel welcomed and quickly develop a sense of belonging.
- Children are developing their understanding of children's rights in relation to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and have awareness of a few of the UNCRC articles. Previously, older children explored the articles linking these to local Orcadian dialect. Teachers should continue to make relevant links to the UNCRC across curricular learning and when working with partners. This will help to support children's growing knowledge and understanding of their rights.
- Children demonstrate awareness of their own and others' wellbeing and show compassion and care when learning and playing together. Appropriate to their age and stage, they understand wellbeing indicators and, in authentic ways, discuss how these relate to their individual lives. For example, children identify food choices to make a healthy packed lunch for an excursion. Previously, children have used 'wellbeing wheels' to help them to reflect on aspects of their own wellbeing. Staff should continue to support children to deepen their understanding of wellbeing indicators and identify the related skills they are developing through health and wellbeing activities.
- Children have a strong understanding of the importance of feeling safe. Teachers provide well-considered activities to support children to apply their knowledge and skills. For example, they can identify and talk about simple ways to keep safe online. Children discuss safety and risks in their outdoor play and on visits around the island. They meet and learn with the local nurse practitioner and emergency service responders to learn and practise first aid skills. This is particularly relevant and of significant importance for their rural island context.
- The acting headteacher works very well with partners and partner agencies to enhance wellbeing and the health and wellbeing curriculum. She uses national events thoughtfully to raise children's awareness and introduce new ideas, such as mental health awareness week. Children apply learning from their physical education lessons during arranged activity days with the 'peedie' islands' schools. As a result, children are developing a well-rounded understanding of different aspects of health. Where multi-agency planning and partnership is required, the acting headteacher works effectively with other agencies to support children and families.
- The school's approaches are embedded in legislation and national guidance, such as 'Getting it Right for Every Child'. The acting headteacher and staff understand and apply their statutory responsibilities in relation to meeting the additional support needs of learners. Staff identify and

minimise any potential barriers to learning progress and wellbeing and ensure learning and achievement opportunities are accessible to all children.

- The acting headteacher regularly monitors children's attendance at school to identify any patterns. Persistent low attendance or late coming is not an issue. If any families experience challenges with timekeeping and attendance, tailored support is put in place promptly. As a result, school attendance figures are positive and currently in line with the national average.
- Staff have embedded nurturing and caring approaches which support children to learn to regulate their behaviour and to handle any disagreements that might arise. There is a calm, purposeful and encouraging ethos around the school at all times. Children are well-behaved and respectful to one another and to adults. This is particularly demonstrated during school lunch each day where all adults and children sit together to eat and talk about their lives. Children help to set up and tidy away. They use good manners and participate in thoughtful conversations.
- Children mark and celebrate a variety of occasions with the island community, such as Easter, Chinese New Year and other faith events. The acting headteacher has organised a visit for all children to mainland Orkney to participate with other 'peedie' island schools in the Kirkwall Norwegian Day parade. Children celebrate Orkney's heritage and cultural links to Norway. Staff recognise that remote island life can at times limit children's experiences and knowledge of equality and diversity. As a result, a more diverse range of books have been sourced to explore new ideas and children experience a range of well-planned learning activities. In a supported, age-appropriate way, children discuss discrimination and prejudice that they hear about or see in the world. These proactive approaches are supporting children to develop a well-informed understanding of diversity, equality and different people's cultures and beliefs.

### 3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

good

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

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

#### Attainment in literacy and numeracy

- The school roll comprises of a small number of children across P1 to P6. As a result, attainment and progress will be expressed in 'overall' statements, rather than for specific year groups or CfE levels.
- Overall, children's progress and attainment in literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics is good. They achieve appropriate CfE levels at key milestone stages.

#### Attainment in literacy and English

##### Listening and talking

- Overall, children express ideas and opinions with confidence and show their understanding well when answering questions. They demonstrate well-developed understanding of specific vocabulary relating to their local natural environment, using terms such as native and invasive. They particularly enjoy hearing and speaking different languages and exploring the local Orcadian dialect. Children should continue to practise turn-taking and building on the answers of peers.

##### Reading

- As appropriate to their age and stage, children read well and make regular use of the well-resourced library and cosy reading space. They use their increasing knowledge of sounds and patterns to read and understand words, including those which are less familiar. They are particularly enthusiastic about stories and enjoy extending their comprehension skills through discussion. A few children use and discuss features of non-fiction books confidently, such as the index and glossary. Children will benefit from further exploring and creating different types of questions.

##### Writing

- The acting headteacher identified children's writing required further support and adapted the school's teaching and learning approaches. As a result, children are now writing more regularly and make effective use of a new well-designed, inviting space to practise their skills. They write well for a variety of purposes across genres, for example, creating fact-files, recipes, instructions and imaginative stories. Their recent texts show clear signs of progress and improvement, with increased length and featuring more ambitious vocabulary. Children will now benefit from regular practice writing for real-life audiences and applying their writing skills across the curriculum.

## Numeracy and mathematics

### Number, money and measure

- Children demonstrate mental agility appropriate for their age and carry out calculations using a range of strategies. They estimate and measure different lengths and weights using standard measurements in meaningful contexts. For example, when baking with the school cook or through comparing the wingspan of birds. Practical, real-life experiences, such as visiting the island shop, reinforce children's learning about money. They should continue to develop their confidence and understanding of fractions.

### Shape, position and movement

- Children confidently name and discuss properties of two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects appropriate to their stage of learning. They are confident identifying and creating objects with one or more lines of symmetry. Children will benefit from transferring and applying their numeracy and shape knowledge and skills to explore further position and movement.

### Information handling

- Children use their knowledge of shape and size well to match and sort different patterns, such as animal tracks. They use counting skills to answer questions about information they have gathered and from a simple display, such as local wildlife. Children extract and compare key information from tables and charts. They should continue to regularly practise collecting, displaying and discussing meaningful, real-life data, including using digital technologies.

### Attainment over time

- Due to the nature of the rural island community, the school roll changes regularly. Children might attend the school only for a short period or for a few years. The acting headteacher has developed a thorough understanding of the school's overall and historical attainment data. She has established effective approaches to monitor children's individual progress over time and collates evidence of individual stories of attainment and progress. This academic session, all children are making more consistent progress in literacy, numeracy and across the curriculum. Staff can demonstrate that when children face barriers to learning, they make progress in their targeted areas of support.

### Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Children share their successes regularly in class and value their achievements being celebrated through certificates, rewards and the 'wow wall' display. A few older children lead play and games for younger children achieving Active Schools sports leader awards. They also develop their knowledge and skills through the 'bikeability' programme. All staff take special care to recognise the personal achievements and important milestones in children's personal lives. Working together as a school, children are proud of working on national programmes important to their context, such as their Fairtrade award.
- The island community value collaboration as a particularly important skill. Children build their communication, teamwork skills and creative thinking through a range of outings and planned experiences across the island. They develop important interpersonal skills through working regularly with people from a range of different generations. They enjoy a variety of school and community responsibilities, such as helping at island events and supporting younger children. Children plan and lead activities for the island community, such as the autumn fete, which extend their skills in enterprise and organisation. They are becoming more confident discussing the skills they are developing through these experiences.

## Equity for all learners

- The acting headteacher, staff and parents actively address equity of experience and social inclusion due to the remote geographical nature of the island. The acting headteacher gives this thoughtful consideration and ensures children have a range of regular opportunities to learn and play with children from other schools. Children participate in shared experiences with children from other schools and on the Orkney mainland. For example, children from five small schools meet for 'peedie isles' activity days. In recent years, staff arranged a residential excursion for a few children. At times, children also use online tools to support joint lessons and activities with classes in other schools. These important experiences support children to build friendships across nearby islands and beyond, and to grow in self-confidence, independence and resilience.
- Working closely with others, the acting headteacher has developed a deep understanding of the school's unique rural and socio-economic context. Staff successfully source grants and funding to support participation, tackle costs of travel and buy school resources. They signpost activities, entitlements and supports available for families. This ensures that no children miss out on educational experiences.

## 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.