

Summarised inspection findings

New Machar Primary School

Aberdeenshire Council

12 March 2024

Key contextual information

New Machar Primary School is a rural school situated in the village of Newmachar in Aberdeenshire. Children attend the school from Newmachar and the neighbouring village of Kingseat. A few pupils who live outwith the catchment area also attend the school. On leaving New Machar Primary School, almost all pupils transfer to Dyce Academy in Aberdeen City. At the time of the inspection, the school roll of 374 children were being taught across 14 classes. Sixty-five children attend the early learning and childcare setting. Most children live in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) zones eight and nine. The headteacher has been in post since 2017. He is supported by two depute headteachers.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

satisfactory

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

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

- Children at New Machar Primary School are confident, well-mannered, polite and friendly. Across all classes, there are positive and nurturing relationships between staff and children. Children are aware of the school values: achieve, include, motivate and safe. They are able to relate them to their lives and learning. Children are learning about their rights and are making links to the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child.
- Teachers are currently participating in professional learning to improve and extend their approaches to inclusion. Their professional learning focuses on improving the classroom environment. It supports the development of well-resourced and purposeful learning spaces across the school. Staff celebrate children's achievements and provide strategies and information to support children's learning through displays in classrooms and around the school. Children are proud of their artwork from their recent whole school learning context, The Amazing Arts.
- Most children are actively engaged in their learning and are keen to contribute their ideas and opinions. They respond well to opportunities they have to work in pairs and groups. They are now ready to have a greater role in leading their own learning. Children would also benefit from having increased opportunities to influence what and how they are learning.
- In most classes, teachers provide clear instructions and explanations. In the majority of lessons, teachers share with children the purpose of their learning and how to be successful. Staff should increasingly discuss with children the skills they are developing and make more regular reference to real life experiences. This should help children apply their learning in new and unfamiliar contexts. Most teachers use questions to recap prior learning and check children's understanding of their task. A minority of teachers ask open-ended questions to extend children's thinking and make effective use of plenaries to summarise key learning. Senior leaders and staff should discuss and share effective practice of questioning and plenaries. This would support all staff to develop better children's higher order thinking skills.

- Teachers often provide whole class lessons and tasks that do not meet the learning needs of all children. Across the school, a few children require a brisker pace of learning and increased challenge. Senior leaders should continue to support teachers to plan and provide activities which are carefully matched to the needs of all children. Children interact very well in pairs and groups when staff give them opportunities to do so. However, too often children are passive in their learning experiences. The majority of lessons are teacher led and children listen to instructions and examples for long periods. All teachers should ensure they plan and provide more stimulating, interactive experiences with appropriate challenge.
- In all classes, teachers use interactive whiteboards to enhance teaching. In a few lessons, children make effective use of digital technology to support their learning. For example, children use digital technologies to create music, carry out research and play games to support their understanding. Senior leaders and staff should now develop a clear framework for the delivery of digital learning which provides clear guidance on using technology to enhance children's experience.
- All children experience two hours of quality physical education every week and have regular opportunities to play and learn outdoors.
- Teachers at early level are developing their understanding of play-based learning. They have created inviting, flexible and well-resourced areas for play within the classroom. Children have regular opportunities to engage in open-ended play and are confident to select resources independently. Teachers are at the early stages of using observations to support assessment. They would benefit from further professional learning, including working with practitioners in the nursery class. This should support them in understanding what high-quality play looks like as children progress through and beyond the early level. Staff should work together to ensure that children experience an appropriate balance of play-based learning and direct teaching to maximise their progress in learning.
- Senior leaders have recently introduced a clear assessment overview. This provides teachers with helpful guidance on when to use standardised assessments in literacy and numeracy. Senior leaders and teachers make effective use of assessment information gathered from literacy standardised assessments. They identify children who require additional support with reading, writing and spelling. As a result, identified children receive timely and appropriate support to help them make progress with individual learning targets. Senior leaders have recently introduced a new approach to assessing children's progress in numeracy and mathematics. This is at the early stages of helping staff to identify children who may require additional help with these areas. Senior leaders should continue to support all staff to use the information gathered from summative assessments, alongside other evidence of children's progress and attainment, to plan future learning.
- In a few lessons, teachers use a few formative assessment strategies well to check children's understanding. They support children to evaluate their progress during lessons. Senior leaders should work with staff to develop further their approaches to using formative assessment strategies. They should ensure teachers use ongoing assessment information to adapt learning experiences to meet the needs of all learners. Teachers should review the range of approaches used to providing children with feedback on their learning. They should ensure feedback helps children to understand what they are doing well and the steps they need to take to improve.
- Teachers have engaged in moderation activities with colleagues from other schools to support the teaching of writing. This has developed well their understanding of national standards in writing at all stages. Teacher judgements on children's progress and attainment in writing are

accurate and robust. The headteacher has rightly identified the need to extend this work across other areas of the curriculum. This should strengthen further teachers understanding of national Benchmarks and the accuracy of judgements about children's progress and attainment across all areas of the curriculum.

- Teachers use a consistent approach to planning learning across the school. All teachers create a yearly overview, this ensures children experience their entitlement to a broad general education. Teachers plan learning across the curriculum using a range of progression pathways. They complete termly evaluations that are beginning to include next steps for groups and individuals. Teachers now need to ensure their evaluations take account of assessment information, identify clearly next steps in learning and informs their planning. Teachers have developed effective approaches to planning interdisciplinary learning (IDL). They use an agreed three-year overview of whole school contexts for learning. This approach takes account of children's interests and the local area. In most classes, children are involved in planning IDL by creating questions they would like to answer through their learning. Teachers should build on this positive approach to involve learners move fully in planning learning across the curriculum.
- Senior leaders meet with teachers three times each year to discuss attainment and progress. During these meetings, teachers share information about children who are not on track with their learning and higher-achieving learners. They work well together to plan support and interventions to ensure targeted children make progress. Senior leaders have developed further the system used to record the progress children are making in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. They now include information about potential factors that may influence children's progress and attainment. This is helping senior leaders and teachers to identify the poverty related attainment gap.

2.1 Safeguarding and child protection

- 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. Inspectors have identified good practice in child protection and safeguarding procedures.

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

- Overall, attainment in literacy and numeracy across the school is satisfactory. Data provided by the school shows that in June 2023, almost all children in P1 achieved appropriate Curriculum for Excellence levels (CfE) in numeracy and listening and talking. The majority of children at P1, achieved appropriate CfE levels in reading and most in writing. Most children in P4 achieved appropriate CfE levels in reading, listening and talking and numeracy and the majority in writing. In P7, the majority of children achieved appropriate CfE levels in reading, writing and numeracy and most in listening and talking.
- The headteacher has correctly identified that past teacher professional judgements were not accurate and robust. As a result, senior leaders are taking steps to address this in literacy and numeracy and there is now more reliable attainment evidence. This consists of standardised assessments, moderation and regular professional dialogue.
- A few children would benefit from further challenge in their learning to enable them to make better progress. Teachers should build on the knowledge and skills children bring with them to accelerate their progress. The majority of children with additional support needs are making good progress against their own individual targets.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, most children are making satisfactory progress from prior levels of attainment in literacy. A few children are working beyond expected levels. There is scope for a minority of children to make better progress in reading and writing.

Listening and talking

- At early level, children are developing their talking and listening skills well through play opportunities. They contribute to group and class discussions, engaging with others for a range of purposes. A few children need to develop their turn taking skills. Children at first level understand and respond to a range of texts. They identify key information and make simple predictions. Children at second level successfully discuss a range of texts and listen to others' viewpoints. At first and second levels, children are not yet confident in making notes under different headings.

Reading

- Children at early level enjoy listening to stories. They recognise words in their reading books and retell familiar stories in different ways. They should now use their knowledge of sounds, letters and patterns to read unfamiliar words. At first level, children read aloud a familiar text with understanding and expression. They are not yet clear about the different features of fiction and non-fiction texts. Children at second level respond to a range of questions

including literal, inferential and evaluative questions, to demonstrate understanding of texts. They identify several favourite authors and readily explain the reasons for their preferred genre. Children enjoy reading and make good use of their school library. They select texts to read for enjoyment. As a result, they are developing an understanding of the authors and genres they prefer.

Writing

- At early level, children invent characters to share with others in play contexts. They share their ideas in pictures. Children require more frequent opportunities to mark make or write independently. Children working at first level plan and organise ideas and information using appropriate formats. They would benefit from writing more regularly for a range of purposes across the curriculum. Children at second level create a range of short and extended texts regularly for different purposes. Children would benefit from further support to use confidently a range of language techniques to engage the reader, for example, simile, metaphor and onomatopoeia.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, most children are making satisfactory progress from prior levels of attainment. Across the school, children would benefit from increased opportunities to develop their numeracy and mathematics skills in new and unfamiliar contexts.

Number, money and measure

- Children working at early level are developing their confidence in counting up to and back from 20. They use the correct mathematical language when comparing height, weight and size. Children need more practice in addition and subtraction within 10. At first level, children apply strategies to determine multiplication facts. They are less confident in applying their skills to solve division questions. Children accurately measure different lengths using appropriate units. They now need to develop their skills in calculating the area of a shape. Children working within second level confidently create equivalent fractions and express fractions in their simplest form. They read and record time using both twelve hour and twenty-four hour notional and convert between the two. They need to continue to improve their skills in calculating durations of activities.

Shape, position and movement

- At early level, children identify correctly common two-dimensional (2D) shapes and three-dimensional (3D) objects. They use positional language effectively. At first level, children use a line of symmetry to create symmetrical pictures with accuracy. Children confidently identify right angles in well-known 2D shapes and the environment. Children working at second level describe 3D objects and 2D shapes using a range of specific vocabulary including regular, irregular, radius and diameter.

Information handling

- At early level, children match and sort items by colour, size, and shape. At first and second levels, children extract key information and answer questions from a range of graphs and tables. Across the school, all children should be provided with further opportunities to apply their skills in data and analysis regularly in a wide range of real-life and rich contexts. Children would benefit from using digital technology to record, collect and display data.

Attainment over time

- Senior leaders have introduced robust and effective processes to track and monitor children's progress in literacy, numeracy and wellbeing. This robust tracking, regular attainment reviews and moderation activities are supporting teachers to develop their

understanding of achievement of a level. As a result, the tracking of children's attainment over time is becoming more reliable.

- Senior leaders and teachers use a range of data and assessments to review regularly children's progress. They plan interventions to support children who need help or challenge with learning. Senior leaders analyse data for year groups, cohorts and individuals. Senior leaders should now look to extend their tracking of attainment to include all other curriculum areas.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Staff value children's achievements both in and outside of school. Children's achievements are celebrated at assemblies, on achievement boards and on online platforms. Children are developing skills for learning, life and work through a range of activities including enterprise projects and whole school musical performances.
- All children contribute to improving the school. Senior leaders use the reflective questions in 'How good is OUR school?' to gather children's views on their learning and the life of the school. Children use an online application to answer weekly reflection questions posed by senior leaders. As a result, children know that their opinions are valued and acted upon. Senior leaders should now build on this work and continue to provide children with greater responsibility in making decisions about school improvement.
- The majority of children participate in a variety of activities such as choir, netball, gardening and coding. Children talk confidently about the skills they are developing during these opportunities including teamwork, problem-solving and responsibility. A few children lead lunchtime clubs for other children to attend. Senior leaders should work with partners to further increase opportunities for all children to engage in a range of appropriate activities across all contexts of learning. Staff track children's participation in clubs and activities. This helps senior leaders identify children who are at risk of missing out and encourage participation in clubs or activities in school and the wider community.

Equity for all learners

- Senior leaders and staff understand appropriately the social and economic context of the school. They know the children and their families well. Senior leaders consult annually with parents how the Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) can be used to close the poverty related attainment gap at New Machar Primary School. Senior leaders are using PEF to fund additional staff to provide targeted literacy and numeracy support for individuals and small groups of children to close gaps in learning. Senior leaders and staff should strengthen their approaches to monitor the impact of interventions funded by PEF on children's attainment. This will support them in determining whether PEF funded interventions are helping to reduce the poverty related attainment gap.
- Senior leaders have a good awareness of the cost of the school day and seek to support all children and families equitably. They offer a swap shop for school uniforms and where necessary have accessed external funds and resources to support families. As a result, senior leaders ensure cost is not a barrier to participation in educational trips. School staff should develop a position statement on the school's actions to address the cost of the school day. This will highlight their approaches and expectations to break down any stigma and ensure all children have equity of experience.
- Senior leaders monitor attendance regularly. They follow local authority attendance procedures. They work with partners to provide timely support for children and families when

attendance levels begin to fall. As a result, attendance at New Machar Primary School has been above the national average for the last three years.

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.