Summarised inspection findings

Drumblade Primary School

Aberdeenshire Council

09 October 2018

Key contextual information

Drumblade Primary School is a small rural school situated about 5 miles from the village of Huntly. There are three classes as well as a separate nursery building. The school roll is 49 in the primary classes and 16 in the nursery. Many children travel to school by bus..

1.3 Leadership of change	weak

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

- There are important weaknesses in the leadership of change at Drumblade Primary School. The school has experienced a number of headteachers over several years. The current headteacher has been in place for 18 months. Almost all of the teachers are approximately one year in post. As a result, the school community is keen to experience greater levels of stability, especially in school leadership. The school is not yet experiencing the levels of strategic leadership and stability that it requires. The overall leadership, the management and the organisation within the school require prompt action to ensure improvement in children's experiences and progress. Almost all stakeholders who are currently part of the school community, told us that the school is not yet moving in a positive direction.

- The school and nursery would benefit from greater levels of strategic direction. Relationships amongst the staff are not yet strong enough to build a collaborative future. There have been some recent improvements in the efforts to build positive relationships, however these are not yet yielding any positive outcomes. Whilst there is reference to a school vision, the impact of this is not evident across the school. A few children can talk about the vision but are unclear how it affects them in school.

- The school improvement plan is not sufficiently informed by effective self-evaluation. There are a range of initiatives and activities, but these are not yet linked to planning for improvement nor to raising attainment. There now needs to be greater clarity for staff and pupils about school improvement targets. There are currently three overarching targets in the school plan, however, staff have been working towards several other targets, which are not part of the plan. Parents and teachers would benefit from involvement in discussions about the direction of the school. It is essential that all members of the school community now come together to develop a shared vision for raising attainment and achievement for all children. This should include creating a unique and dynamic curriculum to reflect the needs of all children within the rich context of the school.

- Class teachers are involved in leading aspects of work which relate to their own classroom practice. The teachers are enthusiastic and have the potential to drive change and improvement across the school. This untapped staff potential has the capacity to move the school in a positive direction. The current lack of strategic leadership means that teachers do not have a good understanding of their role in school improvement.

- Children attending Drumblade school also have the potential to be leaders and drivers of change. However, their experiences in school do not offer them sufficient opportunity to develop these skills. All children should now be more involved in discussing and agreeing school priorities. Although a few can articulate their understanding of what is happening in their school, there would be benefit in developing children's leadership capacity.

- Children are not yet included and fully involved in the life of the school. A few have roles which enable them to have a greater level of involvement but this should be increased to include all children. Although all children are signed up to an improvement group, the meetings are too irregular and unfocussed. Almost all children had little understanding of what their groups had achieved.

- Overall, the leadership and direction of the school lacks focus. There is potential amongst both staff and children to lead and improve the school in a positive and fulfilling direction. We have asked the local authority to take action to support improvements in the school.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment	satisfactory

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

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

- Relationships between teachers and pupils are respectful. Children are becoming aware of their rights and one class has a class charter based on the UNCRC (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child) statements. Almost all children are on task in classes and are interested in their learning. They collaborate well in groups and in pairs. A majority of learners' experiences are differentiated and enjoyable. Learners in the senior classes use digital technology appropriately and are beginning to take responsibility for their learning. Achievements outside of school are beginning to be celebrated by children through the use of coins to gain house points.

- Digital technology is used in a majority of classes to support learning. In most lessons teacher questioning is effective in enabling higher order thinking. Learning intentions and success criteria are used in a majority of lessons and these help children to understand the focus of their learning. Children should now be more involved in setting their own success criteria in order to empower them further as independent learners. Teachers should refer back more consistently to the learning intention and success criteria throughout the lesson. Teachers provide formative feedback to almost all learners and almost all learners self and peer assess their learning. These are beginning to enable children to know themselves as learners.

- Teachers assess writing and mathematics as an ongoing part of learning and teaching. Standardised assessments have been used in line with national guidelines. Assessment information should now be used to inform planning and next steps for learners. Teachers require to be involved in moderation exercises across their learning cluster to ensure that appropriate standards are being set for learners.

- Teachers plan weekly to respond to the needs of the learners. Timetables currently illustrate a lack of breadth across the curricular areas. We have asked staff to review approaches to planning to ensure children experience all curricular areas. Learners are beginning to be involved in planning aspects of interdisciplinary learning, taking account of their interests. Clear systems require to be established to ensure that tracking and monitoring of learner's progress is effective and informs next steps in learning. The progress of learners who face additional challenges should also be tracked and monitored to ensure that effective interventions are put in place to support their learning.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning and development pathways

■ The curriculum at Drumblade School needs prompt attention and improvement. Learning across the school is not progressive or well planned. Children's experiences are inconsistent across the stages. There is a need to develop a shared curriculum rationale with children, staff and parents. This would enable planning, learning, teaching and assessment to be coordinated and progressive. An important feature would be to build on prior learning in order to raise attainment and add value to learning for all children.

■ There should be a whole school approach to planning class activities and experiences. This should include engagement with children in the planning process, and better reflect their interests and abilities. The daily plan of learning for children should involve them more and this would enable them to begin to have some leadership of their own learning. The use of time during the timetabled school day is not well planned and there are currently long blocks of time which lack pace and challenge.

■ There are some examples of learning across different contexts. Learning outdoors could be reviewed to make sure that the outdoor environment is more effectively included in the planning of learning and teaching. Children's learning is extended to the school grounds for physical education (PE), 'bikeability' and mathematics. This could be further developed to make sure that the outdoor context is being used in outdoor learning across the curriculum.

■ The Aberdeenshire curriculum progression frameworks are used to support the planning of aspects of learning. This could be developed to make sure progression routes are clear for every learner and that children are building on learning across the three classes.

■ There is currently no overall plan for children's learning in health and wellbeing. This is an important next step as part of a curriculum rationale, to make sure children have coherent planned experiences in this important area.

■ Planning for transitions at all stages needs to improve. There should be an agreed plan for exchange of relevant information from nursery and also into secondary school. It is important that full and detailed relevant information is exchanged in a straightforward manner. This will enable all children to build on prior learning and to be challenged and supported appropriately.

■ At all stages children should have the opportunity to develop skills for life learning and work. As part of the whole school curricular plan, staff should explore how to plan and track children's progression in these areas. The school should use the Career Education Standard to support this process.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

■ The school currently works with a small number of partners who support children and families in various ways. Partnerships with staff from the associated secondary school and the educational psychologist help a few children in the school. There would be benefit in making sure that all children who require additional support are able to access support as appropriate. The school should make sure that children with additional needs are identified early and are linked to appropriate partners.

■ Relationships with parents are inconsistent. A majority of parents say they are happy with school. A significant minority however feel that communication from the school is erratic and often confusing. A few parents commented on aspects of safety and their perception of how incidents of bullying are dealt with. There is an urgent need for the school community to come together and to build stronger partnerships in order to fully support all children.

■ A majority of parents are happy to give their time to support the school and they are supportive of events where children are involved. The recent STEM event was well attended and supported by parents. Communication around these events needs to be clearer in order to make sure the outcomes are positive for all involved.

■ Parental involvement in children's learning is not yet evident across the school. This should become part of school planning and plans for improvement.

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 that need to be addressed as a matter for urgency.

| 3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion | weak |

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 are important weaknesses in this aspect of school life. The children in the school are courteous, polite and eager to learn. They get on well together and have positive relationships with almost all staff. The size of the school enables staff to know all children's personalities well. There is however, a need to ensure staff know children well as learners. Their learning and support needs could be better understood in order to make sure all children's needs are being met. Children would benefit from being encouraged to be creative and have fun whilst learning. School rules and behaviour expectations should not inhibit their enthusiasm for learning.

- The wellbeing of children is of paramount importance. This includes their safety and care. The school should, as a matter of urgency, review procedures for the safety of children on arrival at school in the morning. Procedures for ensuring the safety of the children within the school building also require urgent review. This includes security/fire doors, fire safety regulations and visitor signing in procedures.

- A few children told inspectors they were not happy in school and did not feel that they were being challenged in their classwork. They also said that there are incidents of bullying which are not always noticed or dealt with by staff. Children are aware of their rights and all staff should reinforce the importance of respecting each individual in a fair and just manner. Children should now become more involved in all decisions and discussions that affect them. This would support their rights and their engagement in the life of the school.

- Reported incidents of bullying should be sensitively managed and should be recorded. This will enable staff to have a full picture of incidents and to be proactive in ensuring children's wellbeing. The school have previously been using a restorative approach and there would be benefit in making sure all staff are up to date and can use these procedures.

- Children can talk about their health and are aware of healthy foods and how to keep fit. A few children are able to relate this knowledge to their own health. The school does not have an overall plan for the curriculum and therefore children do not have a progressive experience in their health and wellbeing.

- Children take on significant levels of responsibility during lunchtime supporting younger children and clearing the dining area after lunch. It is commendable that older children are seen to be positive role models for younger children. It is not appropriate however for children to be taking on activities which involve them in moving dining tables and stacks of up to ten chairs into a store room, particularly while other children are still eating and moving about the dining area. This practice should be reviewed as a matter of urgency.

- Approaches to safeguarding and statutory duties now need to become part of the school self-evaluation procedures and school improvement activities. Senior staff require to ensure full compliance with health and safety legislation.

- There is a need to have a focus on equality and diversity within the curriculum in a planned and progressive way.

- Children are not yet well included in all aspects of school life. Although teachers know them well as individuals, children's specific needs are not understood and shared. There is no clear tracking system of children's attainment and achievement. There is some understanding of children with additional support needs but plans are not up to date and not available for all children with specific needs. Planning and record keeping is disorganised and it is difficult to establish how well children's needs are being met. There is little evidence of children and parents being involved in dialogue around supporting individuals.

- Children shared with Inspectors that there were previously school clubs to extend their achievements but these have not been available recently. This also applies to children's involvement in school improvement groups. These are too infrequent and irregular for any impact of children's participation to be realised.

- Not all children at all stages receive their two hours of physical education and this should be an important part of the teachers curriculum planning.

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

Overall attainment in literacy and numeracy

- ◼ Overall children are making satisfactory progress in literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics. The data provided by the school is based mainly on teacher's professional judgement. There now needs to be a review of the evidence base which sits behind teacher judgement. Holistic assessments alongside standardised assessments should be part of collegiate moderation discussions on achievement of a level. The Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels provided by the school as predictions for June 2018 show that by P1, the majority of learners will achieve early level in reading, most learners will achieve early level in writing and all will achieve early level in listening and talking and in numeracy. By P4, all learners will achieve first level in reading, writing, listening and talking and numeracy. By the end of P7, all learners will achieve second level in reading, writing, listening and talking and numeracy. Whilst inspectors agree with almost all, judgements in a few cases have been inflated.

Attainment in literacy and English

- ◼ From a range of inspection evidence across the school, including class observations and working with groups of children we have evaluated that most children across the school achieve appropriate CfE levels in literacy and English.

Listening and talking

- ◼ At the early level learners listen and respond to others appropriately. In classes almost all learners can listen and respond to others. At first and second level most children can listen and respond to others in a respectful way, for example, by nodding or agreeing, asking and answering questions when completing tasks collaboratively. At the second level children are developing their skills by giving presentations and debating issues, which they have identified and prepared.

Reading

- ◼ At the early level learners can read aloud simple texts with attention to simple punctuation. They can answer questions to predict what will happen next in a story. At first level children can read aloud a familiar piece of text adding expression and can show understanding. They can answer literal, inferential and evaluative questions about texts. At the second level children can read with fluency and expression using appropriate pace and tone. They can identify the main ideas of a text with appropriate detail.

Writing

- ◼ At early level most children are attempting to use a capital letter and a full stop in at least one sentence and they know the sound of lowercase and uppercase letters. They were writing a reply to a letter received by the class from a fairy. At the first and second levels most children can write for a variety of purposes and audiences. At the first level they can create texts for a

variety of purposes. At second level a sample group of children could speak about different genre and have had experience of writing in a variety of contexts. Most children at the second level can write imaginatively and creatively creating interesting characters and contexts for their writing.

Attainment in numeracy and mathematics
- From a range of inspection evidence across the school, overall most children achieve appropriate CfE levels in numeracy and mathematics.

Number, money and measurement
- By the end of early level almost all children can identify and recognise numbers from 0 to 20. A sample group of learners could use appropriate mathematical symbols. By the end of first level most children can round numbers to the nearest 10 and 100. They can solve addition and subtraction problems with three digit whole numbers and in money they can record amounts accurately in different ways using the correct notation. By the end of second level most children can round whole numbers to the nearest 100,000 and round decimal numbers to two decimal places. They can add, subtract, multiply and divide whole numbers and decimal fractions to two decimal places. A focus group of children demonstrated they can calculate profit and loss accurately.

Shape, position and movement
- At early level children understand the language of position and direction, including in front, behind, above and below. They could also recognise and describe 2D shapes. At the first level children can name and identify simple 2D shapes and 3D objects. They know that right angle is 90 degrees and can find right angles in the environment.

Information handling
- At the early level learners can interpret simple graphs and describe how they collect data. At first level learners can gather data and display it as block graphs. At the second level children can use the language of probability accurately to describe the likelihood of simple events occurring. They can analyse and interpret information from line graphs and pie charts.

Attainment over time in literacy and numeracy
- The school was unable to provide robust evidence to demonstrate progress in attainment over time.

Overall quality of learners' achievement
- The school was unable to provide evidence of up to date tracking of learners' achievements. Children had previously been involved in achievements, for example in sport and these now need to be updated. Learners' achievements are now beginning to be recognised through the house system.

Equity for all learners
- The school needs to take action to ensure that all staff are aware of the needs of all children. Children's learning and support needs should be clearly identified and recorded in particular those facing challenge or disadvantage.

Setting choice of QI: 2.5 Family Learning

- Engaging Families in Learning
- Early Intervention and Prevention
- Quality of Family Learning programmes

- Family Learning in Drumblade Primary School is currently limited to a few events. A few parents receive aspects of targeted support but overall, the universal support for family learning is minimal. Parents are very keen to be more involved in the life of the school.

- In order to develop family learning, data should be used to allow staff and partners to gather intelligence to inform their understanding of their community and individual family's needs. There is a need for stronger communication systems as well as developing positive relationships. These partnerships should be developed to provide robust support to families. Parents and carers should be more fully involved in understanding and planning learning targets for children. Those with additional needs and who may require an additional support plan require increased support.

- Plans should be put in place to engage families in designing family learning opportunities to meet their needs. This will also promote lifelong learning and ultimately give families a sense of achievement.

Explanation of terms of quality

The following standard Education Scotland terms of quality 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.