

# Summarised inspection findings

**Coaltown of Balgonie Primary School**

Fife Council

22 November 2022

## Key contextual information

Coaltown of Balgonie Primary School is a split campus village school in a rural setting. The main school building is surrounded by fields and is adjacent to a public play park. The annexe building is the old Miners' Welfare Institute around 100m along the road. The school roll has increased in recent years and is just over 100 and at full capacity. There is a high number of placing requests and above average level of additional support needs. Most children reside in households within Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation deciles 5 and 6. There were periods of significant staff and learner absence over the past two years, although attendance is generally very high. For a few staff who have qualified in recent years, their main experience of teaching has been in remote or hybrid contexts. The headteacher has been in post for a year.

### 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

- Staff create a warm and nurturing ethos across the school. All stakeholders comment on the strong and welcoming school community. Children are proud of their school and exemplify the school vision of respect, everyone included, achieving, caring and healthy. All staff share high aspirations for children's behaviour and learning. As a result, children and staff demonstrate mutually positive relationships across the school. Senior leaders and staff have successfully created a learning environment where all children feel safe and supported. Staff have used space around the school creatively to create small working areas. Their use promotes children's engagement in learning and positive peer relationships. All staff are very responsive to the individual wellbeing needs of the children.
- Almost all children engage enthusiastically in their learning. In almost all lessons, teachers use a variety of approaches to ensure experiences are well matched to the wide range of needs and interests of all children. Most children are confident their views are taken into account. In almost all classes children work well independently and in pairs and groups. Teachers should continue to ensure appropriate levels of pace and challenge of learning to meet the needs of all learners.
- All teachers use digital technology well to enhance teaching. In the upper stages, teachers make good use of digital devices to personalise learning. In almost all classes, children use digital technology effectively to support their learning. Teachers should continue, as identified to develop further learning opportunities and activities through play experiences and outdoor learning.
- All teachers share the purpose of learning with children. All teachers give clear explanations and instructions and, as a result, almost all children approach learning experiences with confidence. Most teachers make effective use of questioning techniques to develop higher

order thinking skills. Across the school, teachers have accurately identified that they should continue to develop their questioning skills to deepen and extend children's learning.

- Almost all children have regular opportunities to agree criteria to judge their success in learning. They regularly make effective use of digital devices to record learning. Digital technology is used well to give live, personal feedback from which children benefit directly. All children discuss their learning on a regular basis with their class teacher. In the most classes, plenaries are used effectively to ensure children know how to be successful in their learning, with clear next steps. Most children are confident in talking about their targets in learning and how they can achieve them.
- All teachers make effective use of an appropriate range of assessments to help inform children, staff and parents about children's progress and attainment. They make good use of an interactive digital platform to share children's learning experiences with parents. Teachers use summative assessments well to evaluate children's progress and identify next steps in learning. Where formative assessment approaches are most effective, children understand their strengths in learning and how they can improve.
- Staff demonstrate a strong, collegiate ethos with a focus on improving outcomes for all learners. Teachers and senior leaders meet regularly to discuss assessment data related to children's progress and attainment. They use tracking and monitoring data well to agree appropriate targets for children. Staff make effective use of moderation in writing. They should continue to develop regular opportunities to work with others to develop a clear understanding of standards.
- Staff make appropriate use of long, medium and short-term approaches to planning learning. There are clear plans for children who require additional support with their learning. Senior leaders have identified progression pathways for all areas of the curriculum. These are supporting staff effectively in identifying appropriate progression for all children. Senior leaders should ensure planning discussions with staff include an increased focus on skills progression in literacy and numeracy. This will help support children to continue to develop skills progressively across the Curriculum for Excellence levels.

## 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. Areas for development have been agreed with the school and the education authority.

## 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

- School data indicates that attainment in literacy and numeracy has been raised for almost all children over the last three years. Senior leaders and teachers make very effective use of data to identify learning needs and monitor children's progress in their learning. Most children with additional support needs are making good progress towards their targets in learning.

### Attainment in literacy and English

#### Reading

- Overall, attainment in reading is very good. Across the school there is a positive, well developed reading culture. At early level, children are building their knowledge of initial sounds and letters. They enjoy listening to stories. Children should be encouraged to continue to develop their ability to retell stories and other texts in different ways. Most children at first level are confident in reading aloud, and can answer questions about unfamiliar vocabulary. They are developing a range of strategies to help support their understanding of texts. Staff should continue to extend children's reading to include a broader range of texts. At second level, a few children can name a number of favourite authors and can talk confidently about why they enjoy their books. The school has rightly identified the need to further develop higher order reading skills to increase children's understanding of texts.

#### Writing

- Overall, children are making very good progress in writing. At early level, children are developing their letter formation through a range of activities. They are beginning to use their knowledge of sounds to write words and sentences. At first level, most children can write in sentences and use appropriate punctuation. Children have responded well to a new writing approach and most children are engaged and motivated to write. Teachers provide meaningful contexts for children at second level to write linked to learning within class topics and class novels. As a result, children are successfully developing their skills to write in more complex ways. Children demonstrate good examples of imaginative writing across all levels. Staff should continue to develop opportunities for children to develop their writing across different genres. All staff should ensure they consistently apply agreed standards for the presentation of written work across the school.

#### Listening and talking

- Overall, attainment in listening and talking is very good. Children are clearly enthusiastic about talking with adults and other children. At early and first level, most children listen well to each other when working in pairs or groups. At second level, almost all children are confident in engaging with their peers and adults in a range of situations. They are respectful of what others say, confidently offering ideas, suggestions or opinions. At all levels, children develop confidence in communicating with others through opportunities to speak to an audience at class and whole school assemblies.

## **Numeracy and maths**

- Overall, children's attainment in numeracy and mathematics is very good. Across the school, almost all children make good progress from their prior levels of attainment in numeracy.

## **Number, money and measure**

- Almost all children at early level are confident in counting with numbers to 20. They solve problems and show their answer using different materials. Most children at first level are confident in calculations with three-digit numbers and can speak about the different strategies they use. Children at the first and second levels demonstrate a good understanding of place value. Most are confident with basic number calculations, using money, estimating and using decimals, fractions and percentages. Almost all children can discuss the different strategies they use and explain their reasoning. A few children are less confident in solving problems involving perimeter and area within real life contexts.

## **Shape, position and movement**

- Across the school, most children work with an increasing range of two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects. As children move through the school, staff should ensure that children learn and use appropriate mathematical language to support their conceptual development. Children at the second level should develop a better understanding of angles and directions.

## **Information handling**

- Across the school, children undertake activities to display and interpret information in a range of ways. At early level, children use tally marks to record information accurately. At first level, children display and interpret data using bar graphs. At second level, children are confident in discussing appropriate ways to display data for different purposes, in charts, tables or graphs. Almost all children have good opportunities to display and interpret information across different areas of their learning, for example, in comparing the populations of countries.

## **Attainment over time**

- Senior leaders and staff have implemented key strategies to raise attainment in writing, numeracy and mathematics as part of their recovery work. New approaches are being implemented through effective collaborative working among school staff. They are able to identify early evidence that these approaches are engaging learners more effectively and leading to improved outcomes. School data indicates that the school has raised attainment in literacy and numeracy over the past three years. The school has a well-developed and detailed system to monitor and track the progress children make in their learning across all curriculum areas.

## **Overall quality of learner's achievements**

- The school recognises and regularly celebrates a wide range of children's achievements well in a variety of ways such as assemblies and displays. Senior leaders ensure that every child in the school is included and has their achievements celebrated. They have identified that clearer identification of the skills children develop through these achievements would be a helpful addition to the school tracking system. In this way, staff could ensure that skills are developed in a planned and progressive way.

## **Equity for all learners**

- All staff demonstrate a very good understanding of the factors that may present barriers to children in their learning. They identify the needs of children and families very well and provide effective support that is responsive to identified needs. Senior leaders target Scottish Attainment Challenge funding in consultation with the school community, based on clear analysis of relevant data. In this way, they provide effective support for identified individuals and groups of children. They use a wide range of evidence to evaluate the impact of this

additional funding and can clearly demonstrate improved outcomes for learners. There is clear progress in closing gaps in attainment in writing and numeracy in particular. The school has identified priorities for continuing to narrow and close the gaps in attainment they identify.

## Practice worth sharing more widely

The school makes very effective use of a range of information and data about children's progress in learning. This informs a thorough monitoring and tracking system. In turn, this supports staff to work with colleagues, partners and stakeholders to design and evaluate appropriate interventions for children. These interventions, for example in phonics, spelling, numeracy and emotional literacy, meet the learning needs of children well. Strong collegiate working among staff supports professional learning and development. This underpins a significant level of consistency in approaches to ensure high quality learning, teaching and assessment across the school.



## 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.