

Summarised inspection findings

Cairney School

Aberdeenshire Council

9 May 2023

Key contextual information

Cairney School is a non-denominational primary school, located in a rural setting, serving the local community of Cairney and the surrounding area. Nine percent of children live within Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) 1 and 2 and the remainder live in SIMD 3. The school roll is 22 children across two multi-composite classes. The headteacher has been headteacher of nearby Glass School for 12 years. She was appointed as acting joint headteacher for Glass School and Cairney School in November 2021 and as substantive headteacher in January 2022. The headteacher has been committed to teaching classes for extended periods of time since she took up post.

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

- Staff and children at Cairney School have developed a warm, nurturing ethos across the whole school. They work well together to develop an ethos where everybody understands and respects children's rights.
- Staff, children and parents developed the school vision and values before the COVID-19 pandemic. All staff and children share the school values of respect, honesty, encouragement, hardworking, happiness and fairness. They demonstrate these values well in their interactions with each other.
- All staff are committed to school improvement. Senior leaders have in place a clear calendar for quality assurance. All staff engage well in weekly staff meetings to take forward the work of the school. They discuss areas of strength across the school and identify areas for development. They use these discussions to plan how they will take forward areas of school improvement and monitor and review school improvement work.
- Teachers have a clear picture of how they would like to progress in their own professional learning and seek personal reading and training courses to support this. Together, senior leaders and teachers identify leadership roles for all teachers due to their professional strengths and personal interests. Teachers are leading successfully areas of the school's work such as planning and science and technology. Senior leaders should now provide formal opportunities for staff to engage in professional review and development discussions.
- The headteacher has had a teaching commitment in the partner school for a significant period of time. As a result, senior leaders have been unable to carry out formal observations of learning and teaching. During this period, senior leaders have used informal class visits and discussion to support staff to develop their skills in learning and teaching. All teachers have made a positive start to using How good is our school? 4th edition (HGIOS4) to evaluate learning, teaching and assessment across the school. They have developed a shared understanding of the key features of a highly successful lesson. This is helping to ensure

children experience consistent approaches to learning and teaching at all stages. Senior leaders and teachers involve all children in self-evaluation activities, such as the review of the school environment and evaluating how well they link the work of the school to children's rights. This is embedded in the day-to-day work of the school. Senior leaders and staff should formalise the recording of all self-evaluation activities. Senior leaders should seek the views regularly of parents as part of the planned programme of self-evaluation. This should help senior leaders to demonstrate more clearly how school improvement links with self-evaluation activities.

- Across the school, all children have leadership roles as part of the recently formed pupil council, Eco group, science technology engineering and maths (STEM) 'champs' and library leaders. Children are proud of their roles and talk confidently about their leadership work. All children in the school took part successfully in an 'evaluative walk round' to identify areas of the school environment they would like to change. The pupil council have collated the children's views and are beginning to identify areas of priority.
- Senior leaders meet regularly with teachers to monitor children's attainment and identify next steps in learning. Together, they use teachers assessment information effectively to identify children's progress through Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels. They should now record more clearly, on a whole school basis, children's progress through CfE levels. This should help senior leaders to develop further a strategic approach to analysing attainment data closely to help raise attainment and identify key areas for school improvement.
- Senior leaders and teachers have a strong focus on monitoring and developing children's wellbeing. Teachers support all children to evaluate their own wellbeing twice a year. Senior leaders use this information effectively to support children who have identified areas of wellbeing they need support with. This is helping all children to feel confident and happy in school. Children engage well in school initiatives, such as the review of the environment and planning learning across the curriculum.
- All staff share a strong understanding of the unique socio-economic and cultural context of the school. They are highly aware of the needs of children and families. Senior leaders and teachers identified resources effectively to support children affected by financial hardship to make progress. They have used Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) to purchase these resources and provide swimming lessons for all children. All children benefit from the use of the new resources. Senior leaders should now consider how to develop further approaches to involving children and parents in making decisions about how they use additional funding.

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

- All staff ensure there is a calm, positive and inclusive ethos across the school. There are strong positive relationships between children and staff and between children. Children often work together successfully on whole school projects, such as, STEM challenges. This helps to develop positive relationships across all stages. Teachers carry out regular and informal checks on children's wellbeing. They use appropriate strategies well to help children feel safe and ready to learn.
- Teachers help children successfully to understand children's rights by focusing on the 'right of the week' at assembly and linking this to class activities. All children worked together well to develop the school charter which is closely linked to children's rights. Almost all children demonstrate their understanding of children's rights effectively. They demonstrate positive behaviour in school and respect adults and their peers. Senior leaders and teachers should consider how they further embed children's knowledge and understanding of children's rights as they develop a new relationships policy.
- Almost all children are enthusiastic and eager to learn. They settle quickly to learning activities. Almost all children engage well with a range of individual, group and whole class activities across all curriculum areas. Most children say they enjoy learning at school. Teachers ask children what they already know and what they would like to learn more about effectively when starting a new piece of work. This helps teachers to plan learning well which links learning across curriculum areas and is relevant and enjoyable for children. Teachers provide learning activities which are well-matched to children's individual needs.
- In the majority of lessons, teachers share the purpose of learning with children well. Teachers should ensure they share the purpose of learning in all lessons. A next step is for children and teachers to work together to identify how children can be successful in their learning. Older children use a range of strategies to self-assess their work and assess the work of their peers. Teachers use a range of questioning techniques effectively to check children's understanding and develop thinking skills. Older children explain their thinking well when answering open ended questions.
- Children and teachers use a range of digital resources effectively, such as interactive whiteboards, computers and tablets, to enhance learning and teaching in all classes. For example, older children use digital technology well to access learning tasks, carry out research and display their learning. Teachers have built effectively on the success of engaging children in remote learning during periods of school closure due to the COVID-19 pandemic. On occasion, the school may be closed due to adverse weather conditions and its rural setting. Teachers provide online learning activities successfully for all children who are unable to attend school. This helps children to continue to build on their in-school learning at home.

- Teachers provide a range of written and verbal feedback to children about their work. They should ensure they link feedback to the purpose of learning and the skills children are developing. This should help teachers and children to identify clearly next steps for learning and help children to progress further. Older children regularly reflect on their learning across the curriculum. They identify successfully what they have learned and what they found challenging. They share this information effectively with others via written notes on wall displays. Older children set appropriate weekly targets for their learning. They review these and identify their success well. Senior leaders and teachers should ensure that all children set regular targets for their learning and identify how well they are making progress.
- Younger children have regular opportunities to learn through a range of play-based activities planned by staff, such as games and exploration of letters, sounds and shapes. Staff interact well with children to extend their learning through careful questioning. Teachers do not yet use play-based approaches fully to engage children in learning. Teachers should engage with national practice guidance and visit other establishments to see high quality learning through play. This should help them to develop further the learning environment and enrich children's learning experiences through a fully play-based approach.
- Teachers use a range of approaches effectively to assess children's learning. They use National Benchmarks well to identify children's attainment of a CfE level, or if they are on track to achieve a level, in literacy and English, numeracy and mathematics and health and wellbeing. Teachers have recently engaged in moderation of writing with colleagues from other cluster schools. This is helping them to develop a shared understanding of national standards of achievement of a CfE level in writing. Teachers should now extend this practice further to include moderation of other areas of literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics.
- Teachers use local authority progression frameworks across all areas of the curriculum to help them plan over different timescales to meet the needs of all learners. Teachers involve children effectively in planning learning which links learning across the curriculum. They should develop approaches to involve children in planning all aspects of their learning.
- Senior leaders have developed approaches to meet with teachers three times a year to discuss children's progress in literacy and English, numeracy and mathematics and health and wellbeing. They identify children who are on track to achieve the appropriate CfE level by the end of P1, P4 and P7. They also identify those who are exceeding expectations or need additional support with their learning. Teachers use data gathered to plan activities that provide support or challenge to help meet children's needs.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- Teachers use progression pathways effectively across all curriculum areas to plan learning. Staff have developed useful bundles of CfE experiences and outcomes to plan learning which links learning across curriculum areas. They have identified successfully a range of relevant contexts for learning across the curriculum. Teachers ask children what they already know and what they would like to learn before they start a block of work which links learning across curriculum areas. As a result, children experience a curriculum which provides challenge and enjoyment and is relevant to the unique context of the school.
- Across the school all children learn French. Younger children have daily opportunities to practise their skills in French successfully when following morning routines, such as ordering lunch and saying good morning. Older children develop their French skills well when learning in other curricular areas, such as drama. Children in P1-3 are developing their knowledge of Scots language well. Children in P4-7 are at the early stages of learning Gaelic vocabulary.
- All children receive their full entitlement to two hours high quality physical education each week.
- All teachers use digital technology as a tool for learning and teaching. Children use digital technology across the curriculum effectively, such as, to carry out research or present their learning. For example, older children used an online app successfully to create animations of the Chinese Zodiac animals.
- Teachers encourage children to identify which aspects of their learning they could take outdoors, and teachers provide regular opportunities for children to do so. For example, younger children found two-dimensional shapes occurring naturally outdoors. Staff now need to develop a progressive outdoor learning programme to help teachers and children identify the wide range of skills they are developing
- Children at all stages are beginning to develop their knowledge about the world of work. Older children researched careers available, the qualifications needed and potential earnings. Teachers link knowledge children are developing in daily learning to the world of work. For example, older children learning about angles identified successfully a range of professions where this knowledge is applied. Senior leaders and teachers should make use of local and national guidance, including the Career Education Standard (3-18), to access a progressive skills framework. This should help them to ensure children get a wide range of opportunities to develop specific skills for life, learning and work.
- Senior leaders and teachers use effective procedures to help children as they move from nursery to P1 and from P7 to secondary school. School staff work well with staff in the local secondary school to provide enhanced programmes of support for children with additional support needs as they move from P7 to secondary school.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- Parents welcome the range of strategies senior leaders and staff use to keep them informed about the work of the school, such as social media, emails and newsletters. Senior leaders should ensure information about the school is shared consistently across all platforms. This should help parents to receive consistent information regardless of which platform they choose to access school communications. A minority of parents would like more information about their child's progress throughout the school year. Parents welcome the increased opportunities to come into school to find out about their child's learning after pandemic related restrictions were lifted. For example, they enjoyed coming into school for 'Coffee and Catch-up' and to see their child perform in the Christmas play. Senior leaders are beginning to seek parents' views about what they like about the school.
- The majority of parents have chosen to be part of the recently formed Parent Council, 'Friends of Cairney.' They have been successful in their application for funds to pay for improvements to enhance outdoor learning across the school. They have consulted with teachers and children, and plan to engage with all parents, about how best to use the funds they will receive.

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.

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

- Across the school, all staff and children share positive relationships. They demonstrate mutual respect and have a strong focus on looking after each other. Older children help younger children successfully at break times and during whole school events, such as science and technology projects. This helps all children to include each other fully in the life the school. There is a worry box in the main entrance to the school. Children use this appropriately to share any worries that they have. Senior leaders check the box regularly and discuss any issues with children as they arise and identify appropriate interventions to help. Most children can identify an adult they can talk to if they have any worries or concerns. Almost all children have a clear understanding of children's rights. They demonstrate awareness of the rights of other children as they work and play. This helps most children and parents to feel that staff treat all children fairly and with respect. Most children say the school helps them to become confident and that they enjoy learning.
- Almost all children have a sound understanding of the wellbeing indicators. They describe confidently the ways in which staff help them to develop their wellbeing through the year. For example, they can describe how staff and other children help them to feel included by making sure they always have someone to play with at break times. All children reflect on their own wellbeing skilfully using the wellbeing indicators twice a year. Senior leaders use this information well to take appropriate action to support children who identify areas of wellbeing they feel they need to develop. They should now use the information they gather through wellbeing self-assessments to help children set targets to improve their wellbeing and to monitor children's wellbeing strategically. This should help staff and children to clearly identify the progress children are making in wellbeing.
- Almost all children know what bullying behaviour is and can identify strategies effectively to help them if they are affected by it or see someone else being bullied. They have linked anti-bullying strategies to children's rights successfully. Almost all parents and children say the school deals appropriately with bullying or that they have never experienced bullying.
- Staff use a progressive framework effectively to plan a broad health and wellbeing curriculum which is relevant to children's needs and interests. They relate all health and wellbeing work to the wellbeing indicators. Most older children can describe how to stay safe when using digital technology. Most children say the school helps them to lead a healthy lifestyle. They can describe the importance of being outside and have lots of opportunities to get regular exercise and identify key features of healthy eating.
- Teachers work well with multi-agency partners to provide assistance for children who require additional support. Senior leaders need to review approaches to planning for children who require additional support. They should ensure there are regular meetings where all professionals who work with individuals, parents and staff are fully involved in reviewing

children's progress and setting new targets for learning in one shared plan. They should ensure targets are specific and measurable.

- The headteacher monitors children's attendance closely. There are effective procedures in place to check why children are absent and if they are safe. Attendance across the school is good and above the national average. All staff engage in regular professional learning about child protection and safeguarding. As a result, they understand and apply effectively their statutory responsibilities in relation to child protection and safeguarding.
- Children are developing their understanding of equality and diversity through the school's health and wellbeing and religious and moral education programmes. All children have opportunities to learn about Christianity and other world religions. This is helping them develop their understanding and appreciation of different religious and cultural events. All children are at the early stages of developing their understanding of the challenges children living in other parts of the world may have. For example, children learning about water made fact file posters about children living in countries with water shortages and the impact this has on children's lives. Older children have identified that there is a lack of texts in the school library which feature a range of characters which represent the diverse nature of society. Senior leaders and teachers should review the range of resources they use across the curriculum for learning and teaching. They should consider how they develop a planned, progressive approach to teaching children about diversity. This should help children to develop their understanding of diversity in 21st Century Scotland.
- All staff have a clear understanding of the socio-economic background of all children and families. They considered the individual learning needs of children facing financial hardship when planning how to spend PEF. They prioritised the use of PEF to purchase resources to support the individual needs of children facing financial hardship. Due to the small school roll, all children benefit from these resources to extend their learning.

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

- As this is a small school with a roll of only 22 children, general statements about attainment and progress have been used to ensure children's anonymity.
- Overall, attainment in all aspects of literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics is good. Across the school, most children have achieved, or are on track to achieve appropriate levels of attainment in reading, writing and numeracy. A few children achieve CfE levels ahead of the expected stage. Most children have achieved, or are on track to achieve, appropriate levels in listening and talking.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Across the school, most children are making good progress in literacy. A few children are making very good progress in literacy.

Listening and talking

- Across the school, most children communicate clearly and audibly with each other and adults. They share and express their views about the school and their learning confidently and effectively. Almost all children use a range of skills successfully when talking and listening in groups or pairs, such as eye-contact, nodding and asking and answering questions. Across the school, a few children need to develop their skills in turn taking when engaging in small group discussions.

Reading

- Older children benefit from regular access to the school library to select from a range of fiction and non-fiction texts. Most children read aloud fluently and with expression appropriate to their age and stage. Younger children are developing their knowledge about the title, author and illustrator of books. They are developing their decoding skills to help them read unfamiliar words. Most older children can identify their favourite authors and explain the reasons for their choice. They read the blurb on a book to help them make choices about which books to read. Across the school, most children can identify features of fiction and non-fiction texts. Older children need to improve their skills in answering inferential and evaluative questions about the text they are reading.

Writing

- Younger children are beginning to use their knowledge of phonics to write simple words. They are beginning to write simple sentences. They need more opportunities to develop their writing skills in a range of relevant and interesting experiences. Older children write regularly across a range of genre and to record and present their learning across the curriculum. They use punctuation effectively, appropriate to their age and stage. They use descriptive language well to enhance their writing. Older children are clear about the skills they are developing in each

piece of writing. This helps them to self and peer assess their writing effectively. Older children would benefit from more opportunities to write a range of poetry to extend their writing skills further.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Across the school, most children are making good progress in numeracy. A few children are making very good progress in numeracy.

Number, money and measure

- Younger children count forwards to, and backwards from, 20 accurately. They are beginning to add numbers to ten mentally. They are less confident about subtraction. Younger children confidently recognise the number of objects in a group without counting and can check their estimate. They need to develop their skills in identifying and using coins to 10p. Older children carry out addition and subtraction calculations appropriate to their age and stage accurately. They use a range of strategies effectively to solve word problems. A few children need to develop their knowledge of times tables to help them divide and multiply accurately. Overall, children are confident and accurate in ordering, using place value and rounding to thousands, appropriate to their age and stage. Younger children describe common objects using appropriate measure language, such as tall or heavy. Younger children need more opportunities to develop their numeracy skills in a range of play activities. Older children need to develop their knowledge and understanding of capacity.

Shape, position and movement

- Younger children identify and sort common two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects successfully. Older children talk confidently about the properties of two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects and explain the differences between them. Older children identify a range of angles, such as right angles, acute, obtuse angles and supplementary angles in the classroom and outdoors. A few older children successfully calculate the measurement of a range of angles using a protractor. Older children are less sure of using grid references to locate and describe position.

Information handling

- Across the school, children make effective use of tally marks to help them to gather information. They present the data they gather using a range of graphs and charts appropriate to their age and stage. Older children use digital tools effectively to display data in a range of charts and graphs. Across the school, children would benefit from using their information handling skills in a wider range of contexts.

Attainment over time

- Given the very small school roll, and changing cohorts of children each year, attainment over time using national CfE assessment data is a variable. However, across the school most children make good progress in their learning and a few children make very good progress.
- Teachers use a range of assessments to check children's progress in reading, writing and numeracy throughout the school year. As a result, all staff have a good and accurate understanding of children's attainment. Senior leaders and teachers use data gathered about children's progress to plan and provide support for individuals to help them to make progress. The data they have gathered demonstrates that overall children are making good progress in literacy and numeracy. A few children are making very good progress in literacy and numeracy.

Overall quality of learner's achievements

- All children have opportunities to engage in a range of clubs during school lunchtimes. Staff have recently increased the range of clubs to meet all children's interests and ensure no child misses out. Senior leaders record children's participation in clubs.

- Across the school, staff celebrate children's achievements, within and outwith school, in class, on wall displays and at assemblies. Teachers work effectively with partners to plan and deliver a range of wider achievement opportunities, such as developing cycling skills and leadership skills as part of the curriculum. Senior leaders and teachers now need to identify and monitor the skills children are developing when they engage with leadership opportunities, wider achievement activities and clubs. This should help children to understand which skills for life, learning and work they are developing.

Equity for all learners

- All staff have a clear understanding of the socio-economic background of all children and families. There was no gap in attainment as a result of poverty at the time of the inspection. Staff have recently increased the range of lunchtime clubs to meet all children's interests and ensure no child misses out. All children can access waterproof clothing for outdoor learning if required. Senior leaders do not yet gather data to demonstrate the impact of PEF on children's attainment. The headteacher recognises the need to review how they use PEF. Staff need to track rigorously the attainment of identified individuals and groups to monitor and evaluate the impact of interventions.

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%

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- Other quantitative terms used in this report are to be understood as in common English usage.

