

Summarised inspection findings

Craigclowan Preparatory School

Independent

7 March 2023

Key contextual information

Craigclowan School is an independent, co-educational preparatory school for children aged 3 to 13. At the time of inspection, there were 170 pupils in Forms 1 to 8, and 50 children in the pre-school. The majority of children live locally, or within a few miles of Perth. Many children travel from further afield, for example from the Dunkeld, Kinross, Cupar and Blairgowrie areas. The school is a charitable trust, led on a day-to-day basis by the head and senior management team. An experienced Board of Governors provides strategic direction for the school. The curriculum follows broadly Curriculum for Excellence guidelines from pre-school to Form 5. In Forms 6 to Form 8, children are taught by subject specialist teachers. They work towards scholarship, Common Entrance and senior schools' own entrance tests and exams.

1.3 Leadership of change

very 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

- Craigclowan School is a welcoming, nurturing and inclusive environment for learning. Staff's shared aim is to work together to support and encourage all children to achieve their potential. The values of respect, integrity, kindness, adventure, humility, optimism and resilience are embedded fully in the day-to-day life of the school. Children and all staff demonstrate these values in their interactions with one another, in classes and across the life of the school. This results in a genuine family ethos, where everyone in the Craigclowan community feels valued and respected.
- The head and deputy were appointed formally by the Board of Governors in July 2022. Prior to this, they had carried out these roles in an acting capacity, and both have been long standing members of the school's leadership team. Together, they provide highly effective and very well-judged leadership and direction for staff. The head is highly respected across the school community. Her open, astute and calm leadership style instils confidence and trust in children and adults alike. She has a clear focus on ensuring children's wellbeing and meeting the needs of families. School leaders and the wider staff team feel empowered and valued by her supportive and encouraging approach. She is supported ably by the skilled deputy, who carries out her newly extended remit with passion, thoroughness and care. Parents and staff report that they find senior leaders highly visible and accessible, approachable, understanding and receptive to the views and ideas of all.
- The head and deputy are supported strongly by the head of pastoral care, head of learning support, bursar and registrar. Each bring complementary skills and knowledge to the extended leadership team. Individually, all promoted staff carry out their remits with dedication and skill. They lead very well in their areas of responsibility and provide staff, parents and children with strong, practical advice and guidance. Collectively, they have led the school community with sensitivity and integrity through a recent period of change, including through the pandemic and other particularly challenging circumstances. Governors and school leaders have high

expectations of all staff and learners. As a result, Craigclowan School is very successful in delivering high-quality care, support and education for all children.

- The Board of Governors, head and senior leadership team have a clear and shared vision for the future development of school. The Board provides thoughtful and stable governance and direction for the Craigclowan community. Led by the very experienced and dedicated Chair of the Board, strategic business objectives have been developed, that detail the future ambitions for the school. These plans include extending the pre-school provision to increase further the school's capacity to deliver high quality early learning and childcare. In addition, the school has plans in place to continue to develop the provision and programme for skiing. Craigclowan is the only school in Scotland to have an onsite dry ski slope. The Board has exciting plans to widen access to this resource for the local community, whilst facilitating children's ability to develop their race-skiing skills at competitive level.
- Governors, school leaders and staff are highly committed to ensuring that all children and young people benefit from consistently high-quality learning experiences. Senior leaders have robust improvement planning systems in place, based on thorough self-evaluation. The current improvement plan includes an appropriate and manageable number of key priorities that focus on different aspects of school life, including learning, teaching and assessment. School leaders have identified the need to continue to share best practice across the staff team. They plan to streamline how teachers track over time the progress that children make in their learning. This will help teachers to pinpoint more precisely the progress that higher achieving children are making, and to plan for extra challenge in learning.
- Leadership at all levels is developing very well as a key feature of school improvement. Teachers are supported by senior leaders to participate in middle-leadership courses and other professional learning opportunities. The recently formed academic leadership team includes senior leaders and heads of department who have completed middle-leadership training. Together, they are leading staff in working groups, for example to share best practice in tracking children's attainment. Other staff on working groups are developing whole-school programmes and frameworks for curriculum areas such as literacy and English, and religious studies.
- Children benefit from worthwhile opportunities to demonstrate their leadership skills. They are rightly very proud of their achievements. At Form 8, children have significant responsibility as heads of school, captains, prefects and buddies. They carry out their duties responsibly, with energy and enthusiasm. On open days, they lead comprehensive tours of the school campus for visitors and prospective families. In doing so, they demonstrate their confidence, communication skills and mature attitudes, as they describe with warmth their school experiences at Craigclowan. Through the pupil council, children make suggestions to improve aspects of school life. This includes upgrading playground equipment to keep their peers engaged and motivated in their learning and play. Teachers should continue to extend the roles of pupil-led councils and committees, to ensure learners can participate in evaluating and influencing whole-school approaches to learning and teaching.
- Senior leaders have developed strong and mutually beneficial partnerships over many years which help the school to grow and improve. The Friends of Craigclowan parents' group provides valuable support to the school through fundraising and organising fun events throughout the year for children and families. Parent representatives for each year group, including the pre-school, provide a helpful link between the school and families. Parents play a key role in supporting the school's approaches to equity and sustainability by organising the stock of pre-loved school uniforms. In pre-inspection surveys, almost all parents stated they are satisfied with the leadership of the school and would recommend Craigclowan to others.

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

- Across all stages, children are happy, motivated, and enjoy their time at school. All staff and children have positive, nurturing relationships and staff know children very well as individuals. Senior leaders and staff include the school values within learning and teaching approaches to promote resilience, adventure and optimism. Children are respectful towards each other and are developing further their peer and self-assessment skills using recently introduced evaluations of each other's learning. This is helping to increase pupil participation, which is a developing feature of learning and teaching approaches across the school.
- Most children are enthusiastic and participate very well in lessons. They learn through a variety of approaches including active learning and investigative problem solving. This results in high levels of engagement in children. As planned, teachers should increase the sharing of best practice across the school to develop further the balance of adult-led teaching and active learning approaches. This will increase further children's opportunities to lead and take responsibility for their own learning.
- Support for learning staff and year-group form teachers provide well-planned support for children who may experience barriers to learning. They address any identified gaps in children's literacy, numeracy and wellbeing. This results in increased pupil engagement and wellbeing.
- Most teachers' explanations and instructions are clear. They effectively share the focus of learning with children, including how they will know if they have been successful. Children experience a blend of whole class lessons, focused group teaching and working in small groups. Most children share ideas and listen attentively to each other and to adults. Most teachers use effective questioning to check children's understanding and challenge their learning.
- Across the school, children are beginning to respond well to leading their learning in different ways. A few teachers give children detailed, ongoing verbal and written feedback about their work. This results in children understanding that such feedback supports them to plan their future learning. As planned, senior leaders should develop further whole school agreement of what constitutes high quality and effective feedback. This will improve the consistency of approach and strengthen further children's understanding of themselves as learners.
- Digital literacy is embedded within the school curriculum. Children stay up to date and can review past learning using an online platform and regular communication from staff. Children and staff use individual tablets and interactive whiteboards very well in class to enhance learning. Children in Forms 6 to Form 8 benefit from participating in a 'Digital Project Course' where specific projects are carried out by children on their individual devices. This is developing children's technological skills very effectively in a meaningful context.

- All children take part in a wide variety of planned, high quality outdoor learning experiences within the school grounds. These include Forest Schools sessions, biodiversity trail walks, camping within the school grounds and optional skiing coaching which has been re-introduced this academic year. In addition, children can attend foreign ski trips, exchange trips to Italy and participate in the 'Mini Dukes' scheme. Children also benefit from visits from partner agencies, museum trips, theatre visits and trips to the wider and local community. These rich experiences enhance children's learning experiences within and beyond the classroom.
- All children receive at least two hours of high-quality physical education each week. Children experience a wide variety of sports which include rugby, hockey, netball, cricket, tennis, athletics and swimming. School and visiting staff also teach gymnastics, skiing, fitness, volleyball, football, basketball, badminton, cross-country and Scottish country dancing. Children report a great pride in their sporting achievements. Almost all children understand the benefits these areas of physical education and activity have on their individual health and wellbeing.
- Teachers make good use of summative assessment information to inform their planning and identification of next steps for children. Teachers' professional judgements are informed and validated by a range of summative assessments and an increasing range of formative assessment. This includes bi-annual pupil wellbeing survey results, standardised assessment data and musical and drama performance exams. Senior leaders have reviewed and updated assessments for literacy, numeracy and mathematics. As a result, staff have accurate and detailed data in these subjects, which they use to inform learning and teaching very effectively. Staff have a clear picture of children's progression in learning across these subject areas and can build on what children already know. Staff have identified that a next step is to produce assessment approaches for all other areas of the curriculum. This will assist staff to build a clearer picture of children's individual progress and next steps across their learning.
- Senior leaders and staff complete detailed transition reports from pre-school to Form 1 and between year groups. Staff complete transfer reports for children at Form 8 when they move on to their chosen senior school. This includes Common Entrance predicted grades, standardised assessment data, attitudes to learning, contribution to school life, personal attributes, talents, and interests. This consistent sharing of information on prior learning supports continuity in learning across stages.
- All teachers plan learning robustly over a variety of timescales. They use schemes of work to identify activities, resources and learning outcomes. Form teachers and specialist teachers maintain termly overviews of the curriculum and planned outcomes. Staff should continue to develop children's involvement in planning their own learning and link all areas of the curriculum to skills for learning, life and work. This will evidence more clearly the impact of the wide variety of rich learning experiences for children at Craigclowan School.
- Form tutors and children engage in termly learning conversations to discuss, share and review targets for health and wellbeing, literacy and numeracy. Staff share reports and mid-term reviews at parents' evenings with children and families. Parents state that their children are enthusiastic and very much enjoy coming to school. Staff track children's progress using a variety of summative assessments for literacy, numeracy and mathematics. Senior leaders monitor, collate and analyse this information and share key points with staff during weekly staff meetings. Senior leaders recognise the need for this approach to develop further into regular planned attainment and achievement meetings with teachers at each stage of the school. This will support teachers to review and identify pupil progress over time in all curricular areas.
- Teaching staff are members of collaborative working groups. Teachers share best practice,

approaches to collate individual children's learning and develop further progression frameworks across all curricular areas. Staff's confidence and commitment to improving assessment approaches and outcomes for children is increasing further. Staff and senior leaders acknowledge this will develop consistency and progression further across all stages.

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. At the time of the inspection, there were no identified areas for development.

3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

very good

This indicator focuses on the impact of the school's approach to wellbeing which underpins children and young people's ability to achieve success. It highlights the need for policies and practices to be well grounded in current legislation and a shared understanding of the value of every individual. A clear focus on ensuring wellbeing entitlements and protected characteristics supports all learners to maximise their successes and achievements. The themes are:

- wellbeing
- fulfilment of statutory duties
- inclusion and equality

- Staff, children and parents enjoy positive relationships with each other. Visitors are welcomed into school and treated in a courteous manner by all children. Staff place high importance in ensuring the wellbeing of children, families and each other. Children's needs and outcomes are a weekly agenda item on staff meetings. Staff use information from twice-yearly pupil wellbeing questionnaires to help identify strengths, needs and plan actions to address any concerns which children have. Senior leaders use this data to identify common issues and trends across classes and year groups. Overall, children feel safe and well cared for. They know that the many adults they encounter during their school experience will support and help them to address any concerns or challenges they have.
- Staff work very well together to improve children's outcomes, including for personal wellbeing. Increasingly, children understand the links between their rights and the wellbeing indicators. Through coursework on health and wellbeing, children are becoming responsible and caring citizens who value their rights and those of others. They are kind and considerate. Children have high expectations for themselves. They very much enjoy the pupil-led, motivating and uplifting assemblies each Friday. They particularly like the 'tell me something good!' sessions, where children's achievements, big and small, are celebrated. School leaders include a school value each week as the theme for assemblies. This encourages all children to focus further on and embrace the school values. As a next step, assemblies could also help children continue to build their understanding of equality and diversity in the world beyond Craigclowan.
- The school's recruitment arrangements are robust and involve necessary checks prior to new staff taking up post. Pastoral care staff are caring and considerate towards children. They carry out their remit with sensitivity and dedication. Their effective systems promote children's wellbeing and help safeguard learners. Children's regular contact with class teachers and form tutors enables their strengths to be recognised and individual needs addressed. Children are helped to achieve success through highly effective partnership working between senior leaders, teachers, other school practitioners and outside agencies and partners. All staff benefit from informative professional learning which helps ensure they have a clear understanding of how to help keep children safe and protected from harm.
- All children are, very well supported and learn effectively through a focused, progressive and relevant health and wellbeing curriculum that is based on the wellbeing indicators. Staff's use of partners' expertise, including the police and various charities, equips children with worthwhile skills and knowledge. Children are gaining essential information on how to be safe, including when using social media. They are developing highly relevant life skills including first aid and resuscitation techniques.
- In health and wellbeing lessons, children discuss appropriately and understand why inclusion is

important for themselves and others. Staff enhance the health and wellbeing programme through celebrating a 'Children's Mental Health Week'. Class teachers and middle leaders have developed this well-received initiative over time.

- Children have a strong awareness of the importance of a healthy diet and the need for regular exercise. The school's highly skilled chef and his catering team rightly take great pride in their work and play a key role in the life of the school. They work tirelessly to ensure children are served very high-quality meals, and their efforts are appreciated by children, staff and parents. The chef is adored by children of all ages. He listens to children's ideas and suggestions and makes changes to lunch time menus as a result. He and his team support a wide range of whole-school and family events throughout the year by providing healthy and appetising food.
- Children take part enthusiastically in an extensive range of planned outdoor learning experiences. They explore the woodland and biodiversity trail and access interesting lessons outdoors in various curricular areas. This contributes to a strong and shared sense of health and wellbeing which all staff promote and which all children benefit from.
- The school places high priority on mental health and wellbeing. All staff are trained in mental health first aid and have received recognition for their efforts. Children are building resilience which helps them face challenges. Staff continue to support each other well. They sensitively support children who have challenges resulting from the pandemic and periods of sustained remote learning. Staff support children's emotional wellbeing with care and attention to help them feel safe and secure.
- Children learn very well in inclusive and nurturing classrooms. Staff, including those who have pastoral and support for learning roles, work very effectively to address all children's needs, including those who require additional support. Staff take very good account of children's individual needs through adapting, where possible, physical surroundings as well as curricular experiences. Children's varying needs are very well met, and all are achieving success. Teachers and support staff engage sensitively and appropriately with individuals and liaise well with each other to enable children to learn. As a result, all children make progress in line with their own development and individual learning targets.
- Children, who need extra help with learning are identified early by staff. The school's staged intervention approach provides a clear structure for staff to follow when needed. Support for learning staff involve children and parents in evaluating and reviewing progress and identifying next steps within individual educational plans or child's plans. Children make appropriate progress towards achieving individual targets which are clear, measurable and well-matched to their needs.
- Children are very well supported through a positive and helpful transition programme which helps them move from stage to stage. Children who join the school at different times throughout the year feel very well supported. Older children help younger children at key points of transition to ensure that any support needs, particularly in the playground, are addressed.
- The school has a comprehensive system in place to check attendance. Children's attendance is above the national average. Form tutors and class teachers use daily wellbeing check-ins at the beginning of the day and at lunch time to identify and respond quickly to any concerns about individual children. School leaders and staff should continue with their plans to develop a bespoke space for those children who need to access to a quiet area to self-regulate or have 'time out'.
- Children's wellbeing is enhanced further through staff's encouragement and children's high

levels of participation in games, sports and extensive range of clubs. Commendably, staff make alternative arrangements to cater for children's individual needs to ensure equity of opportunity and inclusion. Staff are sensitive to children's and families' needs. They work well together to overcome any barriers to ensure better and more positive outcomes. Children are developing their understanding and awareness of diversity and equality through the school's health and wellbeing programme. The school's open-door policy and the head's high visibility at key times of the day results in parents and staff having mutual trust and respect. Staff's information afternoons, open classrooms and parents' evenings all promote equity and inclusion very well.

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

- The school is non-selective. Children are not routinely asked to sit an entrance test before being offered a place at Craigclowan. A significant number of children receive additional support. At all stages, those children are extremely well supported. In Form 8, children sit Common Entrance and senior schools' own entrance tests and exams. Commendably, by the time pupils in Form 8 had left school in June 2022, all children achieved places for their chosen senior school with most children achieving scholarships.

Attainment in literacy and numeracy

- Almost all children are making very good progress in literacy and numeracy. Children speak confidently about the skills and knowledge that they have developed during their time at school. They are very clear about the importance of literacy and numeracy skills as they move through their school years and beyond, into the world of work.

Listening and talking

- Children are making very good progress in listening and talking. School leaders have emphasised the importance of children developing their communication skills. As a result, children understand why they should work on talking and listening. For example, children talked about the importance of using the correct spoken tone in different social situations. Children develop their talking skills in formal situations, such as in class talks, debating and when showing visitors around the school facilities. They speak confidently and enthusiastically during conversations with their peers and adults. By Form 8, children's ability to talk to adults about their learning is particularly impressive.

Reading

- The school's data about attainment in reading is gathered from standardised tests and from reading comprehension tasks designed by school staff. This data shows that almost all learners are making very good progress. Throughout the school, children use class, group and personal readers enthusiastically and this helps them to develop their understanding of genres and writers' skills. Almost all children have developed an enjoyment of reading and can talk knowledgeably about their favourite writers. Teachers carefully choose texts for joint study that appeal to children, and this helps to make sure learners are engaged with their texts. Teachers should, while developing work on literacy, consider how to build in study of an increasingly wide variety of texts, including non-fiction and digital texts with genre-specific features.
- Teachers take care to develop reading skills through work done in other areas of the curriculum. This is helping children, especially in the senior school, to understand the significance of literacy in all aspects of their lives. Children in Form 8 have a very strong understanding of the importance of reading skills in learning, life and work.

Writing

- Almost all pupils are making very good progress in writing. In the junior school, children are benefitting from the introduction of a consistent approach to planning and producing writing. In the senior school, children have developed a very clear understanding of different genres of writing, especially in fiction and they understand the appropriate conventions. They have regular opportunities to write for a variety of purposes, such as imaginative, personal and functional pieces. Children at all stages have a very good understanding of grammar and punctuation and have personal targets for improving these aspects of their writing.

Number, money and measure

- Across the school, almost all children show a secure understanding in number processes and place value. At all levels, all children use mathematical language confidently to explain number processes. Children can confidently talk about their understanding of problem-solving strategies. Almost all children said they enjoy mathematics and are making very good progress.
- Almost all children in Form 1 can identify and recognise numbers from 0 to 20. The majority can add and subtract within ten. At Form 4, children can partition and order numbers up to 10,000. They know the numbers of seconds in a minute and minutes in an hour. They are less secure on the number of days in each month. Most children can estimate accurately length and convert centimetres into metres. In Form 5, children confidently use strategies, such as highlighting key words in problems, to enable them to process information and work towards a solution. By Form 8, children are comfortable in selecting appropriate methods to solve a range of complex equations.

Shape, position and movement

- In Form 1, almost all children identify two-dimensional shapes, with the majority identifying three-dimensional objects. Children in Form 5 can describe the properties of a cube. By Form 8, children have a strong understanding of complementary and supplementary angles and can use this knowledge to calculate missing angles.

Information Handling

- In Form 1, children sort and display data in a few different ways. All children in Form 4 collect information about the weather and display their data on a bar chart. Children in Form 7 can plot scatter graphs accurately and analyse the results to investigate correlation. Children benefit from opportunities to apply data gathering strategies in real life situations.

Other curricular areas

- Children demonstrate their notable skills in the expressive arts, for example through displaying their artwork and participating in music concerts. Children involved in these activities develop resilience and pride in their creativity and practical skills. Children at all stages are developing skills relating to staying safe outdoors, supporting and sustaining the local environment and working collaboratively. Children's views are central to these activities, and as a result learners are building their skills as environmentally aware and responsible citizens. This outdoor work has also led to productive links with schools from other countries. This has helped children to increase their understanding of different cultures and to develop their knowledge as global citizens. School staff are at the early stages of gathering assessment information across the whole curriculum which will then allow for identification of trends in subject-specific attainment.

Attainment over time

- Teachers gather detailed information about children's attainment in reading, writing and numeracy and use this to plan learning for classes and for individuals. This data shows a trend of high levels of attainment across the school. Senior leaders have decided recently to use

different standardised assessments which will provide them with more detailed information about individual children's progress. This will also allow more detailed analysis of the effectiveness of interventions in place to support children's progress over time.

Overall quality of learners' achievement

- Children achieve success through participating in a wide range of co-curricular activities. Children demonstrate sportsmanship through representing their school at a competitive level. Staff track this information to ensure that all children can participate. A few children have achieved success at district, national and international levels, demonstrating skills in sport and music at a very high level.
- The school values and celebrates the achievements of all children. This is demonstrated through assemblies, displays, online platforms, newsletters and the end of year prizegiving. Children's talents are showcased in lunchtime musical performances, drama productions and sporting events. Staff record and monitor children's achievements on the school management system. In Forms 6, 7 and 8, children use personal e-profiles effectively to record and reflect on their own successes.

Equity for all learners

- School leaders and all school staff have placed meeting the needs of all learners at the heart of the school's work. This includes children who require additional support with their learning. Staff know each individual child very well and do all they can to make sure all children build on their strengths and support their areas for improvement.

Practice worth sharing more widely

Staff's collaborations with Perth and Kinross Council, other schools, local businesses and partner agencies are a clear strength of the school. During the pandemic, the school volunteered to partner with Perth and Kinross Council to run a 'hub' for children of key workers from across the Council area. During this extended period, staff welcomed children who normally attended other schools into the Craiglowan family. They helped and supported all children to feel safe and continue to learn and make progress in particularly challenging and unprecedented circumstances. The positive, 'can-do' approach of staff clearly benefited all children and demonstrates the outward-looking, generous community spirit of the whole staff team at Craiglowan 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.