

Summarised inspection findings

North Walls Community School

Orkney Islands Council

17 September 2024

Key contextual information

North Walls Community School North is the only school on the island of Hoy which forms part of the Orkney Islands. At the time of inspection, there were 22 children on the roll, organised over two multi-composite classes. There is also a nursery class. The headteacher, who has been in post since January 2022, is supported by two class teachers.

Approximately 40% of children require additional support with their learning across the school. All children live in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation decile 4. About 27% of children are registered for free school meals, compared to 10% in the local authority and 20% nationally. The school's overall level of attendance is 94.1% which is in line with the national average.

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

- Led very effectively by the headteacher, all staff have developed a positive, nurturing and inclusive ethos across the school. Staff use the school values and vision of 'believe to achieve' as a core feature of their practice. They care deeply about children and foster very positive relationships with children and each other. Children help one another and are proud of their school and community.
- Staff create and maintain a calm and purposeful learning environment. As a result, almost all children are attentive throughout learning times and cooperate very well in pairs and groups. Children show a positive attitude to learning and engage well in experiences across the curriculum. They engage in daily emotional check-ins. Children are very well-behaved and respectful towards adults and peers. They are supportive of one another and understand where to get support if required. For example, children can access calm spaces with resources such as sensory supports to help them manage their emotions and engage positively in school. The local authority also provides clear guidance and support for staff to manage behaviour through restorative and conflict resolution approaches. This includes professional learning sessions led by educational psychology services.
- The headteacher has supported teachers to develop a helpful learning and teaching toolkit which establishes shared expectations to promote consistency across the school. Teachers give clear instructions during lessons. They share the purpose of lessons to support children to understand how they can be successful. They should now involve children more in shaping and agreeing how they will be successful in their learning. This can help make the skills being developed through learning experiences increasingly explicit for children.
- Teachers provide differentiated tasks and activities that help children to engage consistently with learning at the right level of difficulty. Teachers use groupings well to provide learning experiences that meet the needs of almost all children. They ensure universal supports and

resources, such as counting materials, are always available to help children with their learning. They use effective questioning to check for understanding, recall prior learning and promote curiosity. This supports children to engage well in learning. Teachers should develop further their approaches to questioning to promote children's higher-order thinking skills and to extend the level of challenge for a few individuals.

- All children learn across a range of indoor and outdoor environments which motivate them. Teachers make links, where appropriate, to real-life contexts to help children understand the relevance of their learning. They use well-presented displays to celebrate and support learning. Children are proud of their work on display. They have access to a range of books in the attractive school library. This encourages children to read for enjoyment as well as develop a wide range of reading skills.
- In all classes, teachers use digital technology effectively to enhance learning. For example, they share learning prompts and activities on interactive boards. Across all stages, children confidently use a variety of digital tools independently, such as online applications, tablets and programmable devices. Teachers should now ensure that children develop their digital skills progressively with increasing complexity that builds on prior learning.
- Staff are at the early stages of providing a range of learning through play for children in P1. Teachers should continue to develop their shared understanding of play and engage with national practice guidance. This should help to develop further their understanding of the relevance of play and help to plan for quality interactions, spaces and experiences. In turn, this should support children to apply their skills to a range of contexts during their play to help them consolidate and explore new learning.
- In most lessons, teachers provide effective feedback to children to help them progress well in their learning. Teachers have implemented a marking code. This is helping to provide consistency across the school in the feedback children receive. In writing, children have opportunities to peer-assess and in most written texts, teachers provide helpful feedback on strengths and areas to develop.
- Children are given regular opportunities to self-assess their work. Staff have helpfully introduced target setting with children. Children set targets for literacy and numeracy and review these termly with class teachers. Children can talk about their learning and next steps confidently. Teachers should now support children to build a learning profile using examples of their work to highlight where targets have been met. This will allow them to take increased responsibility for their own learning and better understand their own progress.
- Staff have worked together to develop an assessment overview to coordinate the timing of assessments across the school. Teachers plan a range of assessments in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. They recognise how these assessments support professional judgements about children's attainment and progress. The headteacher should now support teachers to develop further their use of high-quality assessments to support children to demonstrate their learning in new and unfamiliar contexts.
- Teachers collaborate well to moderate children's work within the school. This is helping to build their confidence and develop their professional judgements. As planned, the headteacher should seek further opportunities to moderate with external colleagues across a range of curriculum areas. This should help to develop further staff understanding of national expectations and support more robust judgement of levels of attainment.

- Teachers plan learning over a range of timescales and across the curriculum well to meet the needs of children in composite classes. They ensure children who require additional support have detailed planning in place to support their learning. This ensures children with barriers to learning engage well and are making good progress. Teachers consult with children as part of their approaches to planning. Moving forward, they should formalise this approach to ensure that children have a meaningful voice in planning aspects of learning contexts.
- The headteacher has implemented a whole school tracking system to monitor effectively children's progress and attainment in literacy and numeracy. Staff use this data well to support their termly discussions about the progress of all children. Staff use tracking data to evaluate the impact of interventions such as the focus on reading at P4. They also use this data to inform improvement priorities such as the recent focus on writing as part of plans to improve literacy.

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

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

- Children's progress and attainment is expressed in overall statements rather than for specific year groups because of the small numbers of children at each stage.
- Overall, attainment in literacy and numeracy is good. Most children are on track to meet or exceed expected Curriculum for Excellence levels literacy and numeracy. Most children who require additional support with their learning make good progress towards their individual targets.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, most children make good progress from prior levels of attainment in literacy and English. A few children make very good progress.

Listening and talking

- Younger children listen to adults and follow instructions well. They take turns and listen to their peers. Children listen well for information and answer questions confidently relating to what they have heard. They contribute effectively to group discussions and share their views, explaining their answers. Older children express their views articulately. They listen to and build upon the opinions of others. They identify the difference between fact and opinion and give appropriate examples. Across the school, children are confident speaking to peers and adults. A few children need to develop their skills in listening to others and taking turns.

Reading

- Younger children hear patterns and rhymes in words. They are beginning to sound out words they know to read simple sentences. Children read fluently and discuss the key events in a story. They use strategies to work out new or tricky words. Older children read confidently and share their preferences for novels and authors with evidence to support their view. As children develop their writing skills, they should have further opportunities to discuss the writer's style and key features of a genre.

Writing

- Younger children use capital letters and full stops to accurately punctuate a sentence. They join letters together to write simple words and sentences. Children use relevant and interesting vocabulary appropriate to their audience and write for a variety of purposes. They can use common conjunctions. They now need to develop the ability to use more sophisticated vocabulary in their writing. Older children use paragraphs well across different genres. They use a range of punctuation accurately. They now need increased opportunities to write across the curriculum to consolidate their existing skills.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, most children make good progress from prior level of attainment in numeracy and mathematics. A few make very good progress.

Number, money and measure

- Younger children count on and back from a given number and recognise odd and even numbers. They solve problems involving addition and subtraction and use the language of measure appropriately. They now need support to develop further their ability to share amounts equally. Children are confident when estimating amounts and completing calculations involving addition and subtraction. They need more practice in using multiplication facts to solve problems. Older children have a secure understanding of place value and convert fractions to percentages and decimals. They need to develop their skills in multiplying two-digit numbers, completing two-step problems and in calculating time, speed and distance.

Shape, position and movement

- Younger children identify common two-dimensional (2D) shapes and categorise them by size, colour and other properties. As they progress, children identify the properties of three-dimensional (3D) objects and are confident to explain and show lines of symmetry in common 2D shapes. They need to develop their understanding of angles. Older children identify 3D objects and draw the associated nets. They distinguish between different angles, such as those which are obtuse and acute. They should now develop further their use and understanding of mathematical vocabulary.

Information handling

- Younger children match and sort objects confidently and explain the different groups they have created. Children use tally marks accurately to gather data. They are learning to display information correctly in graphs and pie charts. They use digital tools to create simple charts and graphs and answer questions on their results. Older children gather data through surveys linked to pupil leadership groups. They answer questions using different graphs and tables. They know how to collate information in a graph and how to label it accurately.

Attainment over time

- Over the last three years, children have maintained good standards of attainment in literacy and numeracy. Children have met or exceeded performance targets set by the local authority in reading, writing, talking, listening and numeracy. Overall, children make good progress, with a few making very good progress, over time, in most measures.
- The headteacher has introduced a robust tracking system that enables staff to monitor the progress of individual children in literacy and numeracy. The headteacher should now track children's progress across other areas of the curriculum. This will help staff to gain an overview of children's attainment over time in all curriculum areas.
- Staff use reliable data effectively in regular discussions to evaluate progress and identify next steps for learning. They use this data well to plan interventions to improve the progress of individuals and groups who need help with their learning. This is supporting improvements in children's progress and attainment over time.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- All children have regular opportunities to share their achievements both in and out of school through assemblies, in weekly newsletters and on the 'I did it!' wall. Staff track and display children's achievements within and beyond the school and, as a result, children are aware and proud of their successes. They feel that staff and peers value their achievements.

- All children exercise responsibility and contribute well to the life of the school and wider community through leadership groups such as 'junior curators' at the local museum. Their views and actions have influenced positive changes within their school. Children understand that their leadership roles are helping them to develop their own skills for learning, life and work. The headteacher identifies children who are at risk of missing out by monitoring participation. He is now in a position to develop further the tracking of skills children are acquiring.

Equity for all learners

- The headteacher and staff have a clear understanding of the context of the school and socio-economic background of children and their families. They are committed to reducing the cost of the school day. All trips and visits are free. The headteacher accesses grants and fundraising to pay for additional costs. The headteacher places an importance on ensuring children living on the island have the same opportunity for learning beyond the classroom as children on the mainland.
- The headteacher has a well-considered plan for the use of Pupil Equity Funding (PEF). This plan focuses on children's physical wellbeing and improvement in literacy as well as equity of opportunity. There is evidence that planned interventions are accelerating identified children's progress in learning and helping to close gender-based attainment gaps. For example, staff have focused on supporting boys' reading leading to improved progress in reading.
- The headteacher monitors children's attendance at school carefully. A few children have attendance which falls below 90%. The headteacher works closely with families and partners to support improved attendance. This includes providing health and wellbeing interventions for a few children where attendance has been identified as a concern. As a result of these measures, attendance is improving.

Other relevant evidence

- The headteacher shares and seeks feedback from parents on the use of PEF allocation. Plans are shared with the Parent Council as part of planned school improvement review. The headteacher should now involve parents and children more fully in determining the focus of PEF to address any poverty related attainment gaps.
- Staff use a range of progressive pathways to inform learning and teaching across the curriculum. Specialist staff deliver high-quality expressive arts discretely in art, music and physical education (PE). Children benefit from these experiences by developing a range of skills progressively. Children receive their entitlement to two hours of quality PE each week.
- Children receive their curriculum entitlement to 1+2 languages. Children at all stages learn French. Older children also learn German or Spanish.
- Children benefit from well-planned transitions into the school from nursery. They share a connected nursery playroom and classroom area which supports learning across both contexts. There is a well-established transition programme for children to transfer to secondary stage. There are also enhanced transition arrangements to meet individual learners' needs. For example, when individual learners transition from P7 to S1.

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.