

Summarised inspection findings

Methven Primary School and Nursery Class

Perth and Kinross Council

24 September 2019

Key contextual information

Methven Primary School and Nursery Class serve the village of Methven and the surrounding area in Perth and Kinross Council. At the time of the inspection, the 117 children on the roll were formed into the six classes at the primary stages. Thirty-seven children were enrolled in the nursery class. The school received £31,200 additional funding in 2019/20 from the Scottish Government's Pupil Equity Fund (PEF).

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

satisfactory

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

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

Learning and Engagement

- Across the school, children benefit from learning in an inclusive, supportive ethos. The Methven PROMISE (Positive, Responsible, Optimistic, Motivated, Included, Successful and Encouraging) is displayed in corridors and classrooms, with teachers promoting the school values by making reference to this in all classes. Assemblies focus on aspects of the PROMISE and celebrate children's achievements linked to this vision. Positive relationships are evident between staff and children.
- The majority of children engage well in learning experiences when involved in interesting and appropriately challenging activities. In a minority of classes, too many distractions, including low level and unsettled behaviour, result in children becoming disengaged. There is scope for teachers to increase pace and challenge within lessons. The majority of children interact positively when given the opportunity to work collaboratively with their peers. Across the school, children would benefit from clear expectations of what is expected of them during lessons, including in respect of calm, purposeful behaviour.
- The majority of children can talk about their learning and identify their next steps. They understand the purpose of the learning experience and can identify how that relates to real life. In most lessons, teachers make clear links to prior learning. Teachers make effective use of digital technologies to enhance learning in most classes. Staff use interactive whiteboards skilfully to provide a focus for direct teaching and consolidation of learning. Children are confident when using computer tablets to consolidate or extend their learning.
- Children are developing skills relevant to leadership and citizenship through opportunities to contribute to the life of the school. These experiences include buddying, acting as house captains and vice-captains, working in pupil focus groups, organising school events, identifying possible after-school activities, and taking on roles as librarians and members of the pupil council. Children can identify some skills they are developing through these experiences. The pupil council and parent council work together on specific projects, such as the recently refurbished library. A range of after school clubs also provides opportunities for children to develop their skills beyond the classroom.

- There is growing evidence of the contribution of pupil voice. Children are involved in planning for interdisciplinary learning, and exercise choice in aspects of their learning. Learning Journey jotters demonstrate the involvement of children in reflecting on progress, identifying targets and next steps in learning. In a few lessons, children are involved in identifying what they need to do to be successful in their learning.

Quality of teaching

- Overall, the quality of teaching is satisfactory, with aspects of stronger practice in a few classes. The school's learning and teaching policy is linked to the school vision and provides clear guidance on features of highly effective practice. Teachers would benefit from working collegiately to further develop creative and engaging teaching approaches. This will support the implementation of the school policy, ensuring that children have opportunities to explore and discover in their learning.
- In most lessons, teachers provide clear instructions and explanations for children. The majority of lessons are structured with starter activities, direct teaching and plenaries. Teachers use praise effectively to recognise and reinforce the application of school values. In a few lessons observed, children are not challenged sufficiently. A more consistent approach to ensuring pace and challenge for all will ensure all children make appropriate progress.
- In the best practice, teachers are regularly providing helpful written or verbal feedback to children, identifying what children have achieved and what they need to do next to make further progress. This is not yet consistent across the school. In all classes, children are developing skills to evaluate their own learning and participate in a range of peer assessment activities. In a few lessons, teachers make effective use of questioning to encourage children to develop higher order thinking skills such as summarising key points and questioning one another's thinking. There is scope for this to be further developed.

Effective use of assessment

- Teachers use learning intentions and success criteria to share the purpose of each lesson. In the best examples, children are involved in co-constructing success criteria. Learning conversations take place regularly, providing opportunities for discussion of progress and next steps in learning. Learning Journey jotters and Sharing Our Learning communication allow children and parents to reflect on learning, celebrate successes and identify individual targets.
- Teachers assess progress as part of daily learning and teaching. Assessment strategies are evident in classes, although there is variability in how consistently these are applied. Staff use assessment information effectively, to plan any necessary targeted interventions for children in literacy and numeracy. Ongoing observations, diagnostic, summative and standardised assessments provide evidence of progress and identify the need for an intervention. Teachers are working together on developing holistic assessments to provide opportunities for children to apply their learning. This range of assessment evidence, along with professional dialogue, is used to inform teacher professional judgements of progress within, and achievement of, a level.
- Teachers at all stages take part in valuable moderation activities, increasing the precision of their assessments. Teachers are becoming more familiar with national benchmarks and are developing a shared understanding of assessing progress and achievement. As planned, staff should continue to broaden their skills through further moderation activities beyond the school, increasing opportunities for professional dialogue.

Planning, tracking and monitoring

- The headteacher has adopted a well-judged approach to implementing changes in planning for learning, teaching and assessment. Teachers plan using the experiences and outcomes for all curricular areas. A progression framework for numeracy and mathematics provides a clear pathway for learners. The school should continue with its plan to develop a literacy progression framework. Teachers work together well to ensure appropriate interdisciplinary learning. Children are also involved in the planning process through identifying what they would like to learn within a given context. Planning walls are evident in all classes and staff use the learning statements effectively with the children. The school has developed a new planning format for interdisciplinary learning to ensure there is a greater focus on literacy and numeracy across all contexts for learning.
- The school makes effective use of the local authority's tracking system which provides helpful information on progress in literacy and numeracy. Through arrangements for tracking and monitoring, staff have key, up-to-date information to support children in their learning. This includes information about potential barriers to children's access to learning. There are regular, planned opportunities for the headteacher and staff to discuss and monitor the progress of all children across the school. Teachers make use of a range of assessment information to make predictions on whether children are on track with their learning, or if a targeted intervention is needed to ensure appropriate progress. The headteacher tracks groups of children who are facing additional challenges. This supports the school in measuring the impact of any planned interventions. The school should proceed with its plans to include children's wider achievements in its tracking and monitoring of their overall progress.

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

satisfactory

This indicator focuses on the school's success in achieving the best possible outcomes for all learners. Success is measured in attainment across all areas of the curriculum and through the school's ability to demonstrate learners' achievements in relation to skills and attributes. Continuous improvement or sustained high standards over time is a key feature of this indicator. The themes are:

- attainment in literacy and numeracy
- attainment over time
- overall quality of learners' achievement
- equity for all learners

Attainment in literacy and numeracy

- The overall quality of children's attainment in literacy is good, and in numeracy is satisfactory.
- Children's achievements in numeracy indicate that, whilst children have experienced a wide range of appropriate aspects of numeracy and mathematics, a majority have only limited depth of knowledge or secure retention of aspects they have studied.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, attainment in literacy and English is good. Across the school, most children are making appropriate progress in listening and talking, reading and writing. At early level, the majority of children are making appropriate progress in listening and talking, with most children doing so in reading and writing. At first level, almost all children are making appropriate progress in listening and talking, and most in reading and writing. At second level, almost all children are making appropriate progress in listening and talking. At this level, the majority of children are making appropriate progress in reading and writing.

Listening and talking

- Most children are making good progress in talking and listening. At the early level, most listen well to their teacher and follow simple instructions. A few are still developing their skills in taking turns. At first level, most children are developing confidence in sharing their views. The majority listen well to the views of others and know how to take turns when working in pairs. A few children need further support in working effectively with a partner. Most children respond well to literal questions about texts and give clear explanations for their answers. The majority understand the difference between fact and opinion. By second level, most children voice their opinions articulately and a few justify their opinions. They talk positively about being involved in opportunities to present information to their peers, or larger, different audiences.

Reading

- Overall, most children are making good progress in reading. They engage with a variety of fiction and non-fiction texts and make good use of the school library. At the early level, most children apply their knowledge of sounds to read unfamiliar words. They name the character in a familiar book and talk about the story. At first level, most children read with confidence, using punctuation to aid expression. They use word attack strategies to tackle unfamiliar words. Most children demonstrate understanding of the text through literal questions. They would benefit from more opportunities to respond to inferential questions. Most children identify and discuss their favourite authors. They are less confident in identifying features of fiction and non-fiction texts. By second level, the majority of children are developing skills in response to literal comprehension questions about texts. They are less confident in responding to inferential and evaluative questions. The majority of children identify favourite genres of texts and can explain

their preference. They are motivated to read and keen to be involved in the recently refurbished school library.

Writing

- Overall, most children are making satisfactory progress in writing. Across the school, children are set targets in writing and are developing an understanding of how to improve their writing. Overall, the quality of children's written work could be further improved, across the school, for example through more consistency of expectations in writing in different areas of the curriculum. The school's appropriate focus on spelling and grammar will underpin further improvements. At early level, children are developing their letter formation and script size. The majority of children are confident to write independently. They attempt to write simple sentences accurately, using capital letters and full stops. At first level, the majority of children use an increasing variety of connectives and are developing writing skills for a growing range of purposes. They are beginning to write in paragraphs and a few children are using direct speech. At second level, the majority of children use paragraphs appropriately and apply a range of punctuation and imaginative vocabulary to engage the reader. They select information, use notes from different sources and create texts.

Attainment in numeracy and mathematics

Number money and measurement

- Almost all children working at early level can count forwards in 2s to 20, and a minority can count to thirty and beyond. Children show interest in numbers and sets, for example when making craft "monsters" in an activity associated with a book about healthy eating. By P2, most can add and subtract accurately to and from twenty. A few are confident with the 10 times table, and are beginning to show understanding of simple fractions. The majority of children working at first level calculate simple money sums about shopping, but a few are not confident in using mental skills. With support, the majority of children are skilled at estimating measurements, adjusting their estimates appropriately as more information is made available. Children working at second level approach mental number tasks enthusiastically and most are accurate in their calculations. They have limited knowledge of strategies to help them with number tasks, for example to make their calculations more efficient. By P7, most children are able to keep a mental sum of shopping costs, and confirm the amount of change due from £10. Almost all can estimate the sizes of common objects accurately in centimetres, and can identify the most appropriate units to use in measurements of distance.

Shape position and movement

- Children working at early level recognise simple 2D shapes and can explain the difference between an edge and a corner. By P2 most children are able to describe 3D shapes such as a cube and a sphere, as shapes that do or do not roll. Most can discriminate between left and right. Most children working at first level had some knowledge of symmetry, and can identify different types of angle. A few are confident in describing the points of a compass. Most children working at second level demonstrate a sound understanding of different 3D shapes and their features, for example suggesting circular base pyramid as an alternative name for a cone. The majority were confident using coordinates to plot positions on a graph. Working on a practical task with inspectors, children showed enthusiasm for new problem solving tasks such as calculating the area of the floor of a room.

Information handling

- Almost all children working at the early level can sort items by their shape or colour. Most are beginning to understand the idea of sets, for example when organising different foods into their food group, or when choosing resources to create a craft "monster". Working at first level, the majority of children can describe ways of gathering and organising data, for example in class

surveys. By P7, working at second level, the majority of children can discuss the advantages of different ways of presenting data including lists, tables and charts. Most can describe how to organise data collection, making reference to ideas such as frequency and tally marks, bar graphs and pie charts. However, children's experience of using information and communications technology (ICT) for information handling has been too limited.

Attainment over time

- Over the three years 2015/16, 2016/17 and 2017/18, children's attainment improved overall in listening and talking, reading, writing and mathematics. That improvement had been consistent in mathematics. After a slight decline in 2016/17, attainment in literacy had recovered in 2017/18. Staff's predictions for 2018/19 indicate that the majority of children at P1 will achieve early level in listening and talking, with most achieving that level in reading, writing and mathematics. Most children in P4 are predicted to attain first level in listening and talking, reading, writing and mathematics. At P7, most children are predicted to achieve second level in listening and talking, with the majority achieving second level in reading, writing and mathematics. Recognising the small numbers of children at each stage, and the caution necessary in interpreting the consequently limited range of data, inspectors judged that children make good progress from their prior levels of attainment.

Overall quality of learners' achievement

- Children's attendance has improved in recent years, from in line with national averages to above those averages. Exclusions are below the national average, due to the school's strong commitment to inclusion. Children achieve well in developing key skills, knowledge and attributes. The majority demonstrate important achievements relating to the Methven PROMISE, developing skills relevant to citizenship and the world of work. There is scope for PROMISE to be more fully used, for example to strengthen the school's work in evolving a stronger climate of achievement, and raising expectations of children's capacity for self-regulation. Children successfully take on leadership roles, including organising charity fund raising events and activities for school house competitions. Members of the pupil council demonstrate maturity and creativity in working with the parent council to review aspects of safety in and around the school. The pupil council led development of the school's attractive library and will be involved in interviewing children seeking to take on roles as library assistants. Children have shown positive organisational and teamwork skills in their effective development groups and committees, including those for communication, eco and sports. Children in the school choir demonstrate substantial commitment to practice, and perform impressively. They recently won the Robert Brough Challenge Cup and the Arthur Bell Cup at a music festival in Perth. In sports, the football team won the Tulleybelton Cup in 2018, the school's first victory in this competition since 1950.

Equity for all learners

- The school's deep commitment to inclusion provides a strong foundation for its efforts to ensure equity for all its children. Staff have made strong progress in working with parents, increasing their understanding of the importance of inclusion, but also of the challenges that may arise. Staff keep closely informed of local and national thinking on equity, for example through professional learning. Based on this knowledge, staff have identified issues specific to the school, when considering children who might be at risk of disadvantage due to social, economic or educational factors. The school uses effective approaches to track these children's progress, using a valuable framework provided by the local authority. Staff are skilled in identifying specific barriers to learning, and work closely with specialist teachers, agencies and support assistants to support children's learning and attainment. Staff make well-judged, sensitive use of resources made available through PEF, to ensure that all children can access the full curriculum, including enriching trips and experiences out of 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.