

# Summarised inspection findings

Portgordon Primary School

Moray Council

19 September 2023

## Key contextual information

Portgordon Primary School serves the coastal village of Portgordon and the surrounding area of Clochan. The headteacher has been in post for eight years and is a shared headteacher of Portgordon and Portknockie Primary Schools. She is supported by two principal teachers who share the full-time role. There have been a number of staff changes over the last two years. Almost all children reside in the village of Portgordon. There are 45 children taught across three classes, P1/2, P3/4/5 and P6/7. Attendance is in line with the national average.

Portgordon nursery class was inspected by the Care Inspectorate within the past 18 months, therefore, the local authority and headteacher had the option to include the nursery class as part of this inspection. We have agreed with the local authority and school that the nursery class is not part of this inspection. The findings set out below are for the primary school stages.

### 2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

weak

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

- Most children feel safe in school, enjoy coming to school and talk positively about their experiences. Relationships between staff and children, and between children, are very positive. Across the school, most children are motivated, eager to learn and engage well in their learning. Children are well-behaved and very welcoming to visitors. This positive ethos facilitates children's enthusiasm for learning. Older children support younger children well and act as positive role models. For example, when they pair up for activities and when interacting in the playground. School staff know children and their families very well. Support staff interact well with individual children and demonstrate the school's inclusive approach.
- In recent years, there has been a significant change in staffing which has impaired successful progression with school improvements. Teachers are highly committed and work together well to share ideas and resources. The local authority should now support senior leaders and staff to take swift action to improve consistency of quality of learning, teaching and assessment across the school. This will help ensure all children experience high-quality learning and teaching across the school.
- Current approaches to teaching do not provide sufficient opportunities for children to be actively involved in their learning. When given the opportunity children enjoy discussing learning however, too many children are passive in their learning. As a result, they cannot talk confidently about their strengths, progress and next steps. Teachers should develop effective approaches to ensure children are included meaningfully in discussions about their successes and next steps.
- When staff provide tasks and activities well matched to the children's needs and interests, they are motivated and participate well. Staff should work together to build on existing strong practice and offer more open-ended learning experiences which provide appropriate pace and

challenge for all children. This would ensure children's individual learning needs are better met. Across the school, children would benefit from increased opportunities to apply their learning in real life contexts. Overall, staff need to ensure that learning in classes is differentiated well to meet children's needs more effectively.

- Teachers provide clear instructions at the start of lessons. Where open ended questioning is used well, children's learning is enriched. Senior leaders and staff should ensure this approach is used more consistently across the school. However, children cannot always articulate the purpose of the learning or confidently explain how they know they will be successful. There is a lack of consistency regarding the use of effective feedback. Staff should consider how and when feedback is given and to use this to support children in identifying their next steps in learning. They should agree a consistent approach to the use of feedback across the school.
- Older children talk positively about using digital technology to support them as they learn. For example, when researching topics, word processing and in creating presentations. Senior leaders and staff should now look to develop a progressive plan that allows all children to build on their digital skills as they move through the school. Staff are at the early stages of using their outdoor environment to enhance and extend learning. Staff should consider how creative and innovative use of the outdoors can enhance children's learning experiences.
- Staff should develop their understanding of the impact of adopting a play-based approach to learning and teaching through interacting with national guidance. This will allow staff to develop a greater understanding of the importance of the learning environment, learners' experiences and the role of the adult in play. Staff should develop play as integral to learning and teaching to help meet children's needs.
- Staff do not have sufficient understanding of how to assess children's progress effectively and use this to inform next steps in learning. The local authority should support senior leaders and staff to review their approaches to the effective use of assessment. Effective approaches to assessment will lead to staff being able to demonstrate more clearly children's progress in all curricular areas. This review should include the use of National Benchmarks and ensure that assessment becomes integral to the planning for learning and teaching.
- Teachers have access to local authority curriculum pathways to support planning for most of the curriculum. These should be referred to more effectively to inform planning and assessment of learning. Senior leaders and staff should now review approaches to ensure breadth, depth and progression across all areas of the curriculum is planned for effectively. Teachers should ensure they use assessment information to plan well-timed interventions for individuals and groups to improve attainment. They should evaluate the impact of these robustly to demonstrate appropriate progress for learners.
- Staff gather data relating to children's attainment of Curriculum for Excellence levels. Teachers are at the early stages of using moderation activity and National Benchmarks to support the validity of this data. As a result of insufficient assessment evidence, this data is not yet robust enough. There are no clear records of individual children's progress, attainment and achievement across the curriculum. Senior leaders should support staff to work with other schools to help them accurately assess achievement of a level.

## 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

weak

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 number of children at each stage varies and is relatively small. Overall statements have been made about attainment and progress to ensure individuals are not identified.

### Attainment in literacy and numeracy

- Overall, attainment in literacy and numeracy is below national expectations however, at each level a few children are making appropriate progress in their literacy and numeracy. A significant number of children could be achieving more.

### Attainment in literacy and English

#### Listening and talking

- Most children articulate their thoughts and opinions freely and confidently. The majority of younger children can listen to others but would benefit from learning more about taking turns in larger groups. Older children are confident in discussing topics in groups and sharing ideas. When asked, they can report the key points back. Children would benefit from more opportunities to take part in presentations and share their ideas and opinions. Most older children can listen to the views of others. When in small groups, they offer their thoughts and ideas. However, they lack confidence in building on the ideas of others in group discussion.

#### Reading

- Most younger children are developing their understanding of phonics. Older children can read familiar texts and discuss the books that they enjoy. The majority of younger children can talk about their favourite books and older children are increasing their knowledge of different authors. Across the school, children show skill in answering literal comprehension questions. However, they would benefit from developing further their skills in prediction and inference. Older children develop a greater understanding of texts through their weekly 'Book Group' which is encouraging children to read for enjoyment. A few children prefer non-fiction texts and would welcome the opportunity to include these in the book group options. Most older children read fluently and with expression. They can identify the main points of the text.
- Children can access the school library and enjoy the time they have there. More regular visits and a refresh of available texts would further support children's engagement in reading.

#### Writing

- Younger children are forming letters and the majority are beginning to write words and sentences. Older children are developing their writing skills and can talk about aspects of writing, such as character and plot in imaginative writing and the format for letter writing. They are not skilled in writing in other genres such as poetry and report writing. Older children have improved their handwriting and presentation as a result of more recent focus on this. Teachers should now ensure that children develop strategies to support them with spelling.

## **Numeracy and mathematics**

- Overall attainment in numeracy and mathematics is variable across the school. The majority of children could be making greater progress.

## **Number, money and measure**

- Younger children can order numbers well and use the correct terminology when discussing different sizes. They use simple methods to calculate measurement but would benefit from a greater understanding of measurement. Older children can identify fractions and display fractions both pictorially and using mathematical notation as appropriate for their age and stage. Most older children can identify the connection between fractions and decimals and add, subtract and balance equations. They can also identify equivalent fractions and how to simplify these. Children use money effectively to calculate budgets and identify change they would receive from a transaction. They would benefit from exploring real life examples to help their understanding of financial matters further. Older children can estimate short measurements and distances and can describe the appropriate instruments used to measure lengths and distances. They are not clear on how to work out the area of a shape. Overall, children lack skills in mental agility and could increase fluency in recalling table facts.

## **Shape, position and movement**

- Younger children can talk about two-dimensional shapes and basic three-dimensional objects and identify them in their environment. Older children confidently describe different properties of two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects. Children in the upper stages can identify different types of angles. They would benefit from revisiting how to measure angles using a protractor.

## **Information handling**

- Younger children can read information displayed using simple displays such as pictograms. Older children can discuss how they would display information that they have gathered but are not confident in naming different kinds of graphs. All children would benefit from well-planned opportunities for them to research real-life topics and collate and interpret their information in different ways.

## **Attainment over time**

- Attainment over time is tracked by staff. The small numbers of children in each year group means that differences in attainment can have a disproportionate impact on identifying patterns and trends in attainment. Staff regularly informally assess children's progress but now need to ensure this data is accurate and is gathered and used more effectively to inform next steps in learning. They are at the very early stages of adopting a new tracking and monitoring tool which will help to track health and wellbeing in addition to literacy and numeracy. Teachers are not yet tracking attainment across all curriculum areas.
- Class teachers can discuss the progress of individuals and identify barriers to learning for pupils not making progress. Staff should now plan more regularly to meet all children's needs and ensure they maximise children's progress. Teachers have identified the need for more structured and regular moderation activities to support a shared understanding of standards. They are keen to work in partnership with their associated schools group colleagues to ensure assessment judgements are robust and reliable.

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

- Achievements are celebrated in a variety of ways, both in classes and across the school community. Assemblies and newsletters are used as ways of sharing achievements. Staff share achievements in classes, for example Star of the Day and Group of the Week. This is not yet consistent across the school. Children value the Dolphin Awards where they achieve points for academic and non-academic activities. Parents and community members can also

nominate children for Dolphin Points. These awards are monitored by the headteacher. A next step would be to formally track these achievements.

- The headteacher has correctly identified the need for children to be able to identify the skills they are developing both in and outwith school. This would support children to understand the skills they are developing. Senior leaders and staff should now develop a way to track children's wider achievements in and out of school. In doing this, staff would be able to identify any gaps in opportunities and support children more effectively in developing these wider skills.

### **Equity for all learners**

- Staff know their children and families well and closely monitor equity of opportunity for all learners. They ensure that all children have access to trips and there is a uniform bank for families to access. Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) is used to enhance staffing to support individuals who may be at risk of missing out. Staff are able to demonstrate how this support is raising attainment for those children adversely affected by their socio-economic circumstances.

## Other relevant evidence

- There is a current vacancy for a minister within the local area. Prior to the pandemic, children visited their local church twice a year. Their knowledge of key Christian festivals was supported by the local minister. It is hoped this will be rectified once a new minister has been appointed.
- Children are receiving two hours of physical education weekly.



## 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.