

Summarised inspection findings

Lochinver Primary School

The Highland Council

20 December 2022

Key contextual information

Lochinver Primary School is located in a rural setting serving the local communities of Lochinver and surrounding areas. All children on the school roll in September 2021 lived within SIMD deciles 4 to 6. The school roll at the time of the visit is 32 children. The headteacher was appointed as joint headteacher for Lochinver Primary School and Achiltibuie Primary School and nursery class, located 19 miles away, in January 2020. The headteacher took responsibility for an additional small, remote school, for a short period, during session 2021/2022. Due to a local outbreak of COVID-19, the school experienced an additional period of closure in November 2021. The headteacher has provided extended periods of class cover in the partner school and nursery class due to staff absence in recent months.

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

- The headteacher successfully created a supportive culture with a strong focus on developing positive relationships between all staff and children. Teachers feel valued by the headteacher and feel empowered to develop learning and teaching further to meet the needs of all children. Staff, children, and parents recognise and value the positive impact the headteacher has had on the ethos of the school. His clear focus on collegiate working and positive relationships for all has created a supportive and welcoming environment for the school community.
- All staff promote the current school vision of developing confidence, promoting self-esteem and supporting children to achieve their full potential. The headteacher has made a positive start to reviewing the school vision and values by asking children and parents for their views. This work should help staff to develop a more succinct vision and values which link with children's rights and the national wellbeing indicators. This should help children to understand how having shared values should impact positively on their wellbeing.
- All staff are keen to reinstate further links with the local community that had to be paused during the pandemic. Rightly, staff want to develop the school's place in the heart of the community and are beginning to work effectively again with community partners to achieve this. This work is helping staff and partners to enhance children's learning experiences successfully. School staff should ensure that these links are maintained and developed further as planned.
- All teachers participate regularly in professional review and development discussions with the headteacher. They identify and engage effectively with professional learning of personal interest and linked to the key school improvement priorities. Teachers recognise, and make good use of, the increased availability of online professional learning, to engage effectively in a wide range of professional learning. They welcome the increase in teacher leadership opportunities since the headteacher's appointment, such as the development of play-based learning in the early stages. They feel confident to try out new initiatives. Teachers say they are

empowered to evaluate the success of new initiatives and improve their work as required. For example, all teachers were fully involved in trialling and developing new processes for checking children's progress and attainment.

- The headteacher has reinstated the pupil council. Older children take on roles as playground leaders successfully and are proud of the help and friendship they provide to others. Staff and partners empower children effectively to take forward their own initiatives, such as advertising for community volunteers for out of school activities. Older children identified improvements required and made changes successfully to the outdoor area. All children benefit now from learning activities and play opportunities which develop well their independence, creativity and curiosity when outdoors. As planned, the headteacher should continue to extend opportunities for children to take greater responsibility for wider aspects of school life.
- The headteacher has a clear and accurate understanding of the strengths and areas for development of the school. Teachers are dedicated, reflective practitioners and evaluate the success of learning and teaching approaches within their classes. As a result of significant staffing challenges due to the pandemic, staff have not yet had the opportunity to work together as a team to use How Good is our School? 4 (HGIOS4) to evaluate the work of the school. The headteacher recognises the importance of robust self-evaluation, involving all stakeholders, to identify key priorities for school improvement. Staff should develop further their knowledge and understanding of national guidance to support high quality self-evaluation.
- There were significant levels of staff absence last session across the cluster due to the pandemic. This significantly limited the number of opportunities for staff and their peers in cluster schools to moderate the progress and attainment of children. The headteacher has planned a clear calendar for quality assurance of learning and teaching and school improvement activities for this academic session. This includes peer observations and the development of moderation activities.
- All staff have a clear understanding of the social and economic context in which children and families live. The headteacher and staff identified a need to provide targeted interventions for children with gaps in their learning as a result of the pandemic, including those most affected by poverty. The headteacher has prioritised the use of Pupil Equity Funding (PEF), in addition to other funding, to pay for additional staff to deliver such targeted interventions successfully.

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 nurturing and supportive ethos in classrooms. Relationships between staff and children, and between children, are very positive. Almost all children are eager to learn and most engage very well in their learning. At P4-7, children work well together in pairs and groups. At P1-3, children are developing their skills in working together, in sharing and taking turns.
- The headteacher and staff supported children very effectively to continue to learn during periods of school closure. Children and families responded very well to the creative tasks and home learning activities that teachers provided. Children have clearly benefitted from this continuity in their learning. As a result, most children are making good progress across their learning and are achieving well.
- In lessons, teachers share routinely the purpose of learning and ways in which children can be successful. Staff's explanations and instructions are clear, and children understand what is expected of them. A next step is for children and teachers to work together to identify how children can be successful in their learning. Staff should continue to support children to have a clear understanding of their own specific targets to enable them to reflect on their progress. Staff should now help children understand what they are learning and why, for example, linking learning activities to real-life contexts and the world of work.
- Overall, staff provide learning activities which meet the needs well of the children in the multi-stage composite classes. The skilled pupil support assistants and teachers work closely together to ensure that children with barriers to learning are very well supported. A next step is for teachers to provide more challenge in lessons and activities for high-achieving children.
- Each child benefits from having their own dedicated digital device for learning, in line with The Highland Council's approach. In Lochinver Primary, teachers and children use digital technology very well as a routine feature of day-to-day learning. For example, children use laptops confidently to research information, to access set tasks and to reinforce literacy and numeracy skills. Teachers use interesting audio and video clips on interactive whiteboards to stimulate class discussions and ideas. Children are learning to explore and use different tools within a software package as part of digital skills lessons. This is helping them with spelling and grammar, and to work accurately, at brisk pace, when they are typing stories and other texts on their laptops.
- Across the school, staff have created bright, attractive, and well-organised learning environments. Staff make very good use of the school grounds and the exceptional local natural environment of Assynt to motivate children. Children's environmental, geographical, and historical knowledge of their community is developing very well as a result. For example, children have played a key role in the recent re-opening of Assynt and Stoer Parish Church.

They have enjoyed celebrating the unique history of the church and community through art and music in an exciting community project.

- The school has an attractive library. Children welcome the opportunity to read both fiction and non-fiction books. Staff and children are working together to ensure that the library includes fiction and non-fiction texts that are reflective of society. Children also benefit from accessing the mobile library van when it visits the school every three weeks. This provides children with a fresh choice of texts to choose from on a frequent basis.
- Teachers have made a positive start to introducing play-based learning approaches to support children's learning across the curriculum. They have engaged enthusiastically with national guidance, to develop the quality of experiences, spaces, and interactions for younger children. This is having a positive impact on children's independence and ability to work together. Children of all stages enjoy exploring and investigating with loose parts in the school grounds. They play together in mixed age groups to create challenges and solve problems. They are clearly benefiting from learning through play, and make links to their learning in class, for example, in science and mathematics.
- Recently, staff have introduced more opportunities for children to personalise and have choice in their learning. For example, children now help to plan their interdisciplinary topics, evaluating what they already know and deciding what they would like to find out about.
- Teachers use a range of assessment approaches, including standardised and commercial assessments, to measure children's progress within literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. They gather samples of children's work throughout the year to help inform their professional judgements. The headteacher is aware that staff would benefit from a stronger focus on using National Benchmarks to confirm children's progress. The school staff have identified the need to focus on moderation as part of school improvement. This is also a focus for the local school cluster.
- The headteacher and staff have good systems in place to track the progress of all learners, including those who are most affected by poverty. They have introduced a new approach which helps them to monitor children's progress as they move through the school. Staff participate in ongoing discussions with the headteacher about children's progress. They use assessment data effectively to plan targeted interventions to address individual children's needs.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- Teachers prioritised delivering learning experiences in literacy and English, mathematics and numeracy and health and wellbeing during the pandemic and the subsequent recovery period. All children are now experiencing their full curriculum entitlement. Staff follow The Highland Council's comprehensive, progressive pathways for literacy and English, numeracy and mathematics, digital skills, and physical education (PE). Staff have plans in place to now review and develop the progression pathways for all other curriculum areas. This will help them to ensure that planned experiences build on children's prior learning and skills and support progression for all children.
- Staff have recently introduced a child-led approach to planning themes, topics, and interdisciplinary learning. This is giving children more ownership and choice in what and how they learn. Children at all stages are motivated by this engaging approach. Staff's aim to revisit the unique curriculum rationale for the school was postponed due to the pandemic. However, staff have plans in place to now take this forward with the whole school community and the school's partners.
- Children would benefit from increased opportunities to explore the world of work. The restrictions of the pandemic have meant that children have not been able to go on visits, or to receive visitors into school. Staff should make use of local and national guidance to access a progression skills framework to ensure children can now develop skills for learning, life, and work.
- Staff have developed effective ways to support children as they move from the adjacent early years setting into P1. Children in P1 have settled well into school. Children moving to S1 are supported well to make successful transitions. Staff organise a range of different events for children to come together from different rural schools in the Ullapool cluster.
- All children are receiving their full entitlement to two hours of high-quality PE per week. Specialist PE teachers provide a range of opportunities for children to learn skills in rugby, shinty, football and gymnastics. Children regularly access the local sports centre in Lochinver as part of their PE programme.
- Children at all stages learn French. Older children are beginning to learn Spanish. In addition, children across the school learn British Sign Language.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- Most parents say their child likes being at this school and that staff treat their child fairly and with respect. Most parents feel comfortable approaching the school with questions, suggestions or concerns and the majority are confident that their views will be taken into account. They welcome the regular opportunities to find out about their child`s learning or communicate with teachers through the use of an online app. Parents would welcome more information about forthcoming events on a more regular basis. The majority of parents welcome the regular feedback they receive about how well their child is learning and progressing.
- Parents welcome increasing opportunities to be involved in the work of the school following the relaxation of restrictions of the pandemic. For example, they enjoyed being invited to see children presenting their achievements during the recent arts project with the local church. They feel encouraged to be involved in the work of the Parent Council. The Parent Council welcome the support they receive from parents and the local community to support the work of the school, through fundraising activities and community events.

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.

3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

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

- The headteacher and staff have a strong focus on supporting and improving children's wellbeing. Across the school, there are warm, nurturing relationships between all staff and children. All staff treat children fairly and with respect. Almost all children say the school helps them to become confident and that they enjoy learning.
- Almost all children and parents are confident that children feel safe in school. Almost all children identify successfully someone in school they can talk to if they are upset or have any concerns. Older children support and play with younger children well in the playground as part of their playground leader responsibilities. This is helping all children across the school to build positive relationships and feel safe and confident. All staff are fully aware of their role and responsibilities in ensuring the safety of children. All children and almost all parents report the school deals appropriately with bullying or that they have never experienced bullying.
- The headteacher uses a standardised wellbeing assessment effectively to identify areas of wellbeing in which children would benefit from support. Staff now need to use this information to identify any specific gaps in individual children's wellbeing and to provide any necessary targeted support. Children across the school are at the early stages of developing their knowledge of the wellbeing indicators. They identify well ways that staff help them to be healthy and active, such as making healthy eating choices and playing outdoors. They give specific examples of how other children and staff are respectful to each other and how they include other children in their work and play. All staff should continue to embed the language of wellbeing indicators in daily school life. This should help children to discuss and reflect on their own wellbeing and identify next steps to improve.
- Teachers identified correctly a need for children to develop skills to identify and deal with their emotions following periods of school closure. Teachers and partners used outdoor learning experiences effectively to support children to identify their emotions and how to deal with them. Across the school children are supported well by all staff to use a range of strategies to deal with difficult emotions. As a result, there is a calm, productive ethos across the school.
- The headteacher monitors children's attendance closely. He is proactive in addressing concerns and contacts parents to offer support to help children return to school. Levels of attendance are very good and above the national average.
- All staff fulfil their statutory duties effectively. The headteacher and teachers have clear processes in place for identifying children experiencing barriers in their learning and identifying appropriate support to help them to make progress. Children, identified with barriers to their learning, benefit from in-class or targeted one-to-one support. The headteacher makes referrals to partner agencies, where appropriate, and partners and parents are fully involved in reviewing children's progress and identifying next steps. The headteacher ensures child's

plans have clear targets which are reviewed and updated regularly. Parents are supported well to be fully involved in the process. Children with identified barriers to their learning are making good progress.

- 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.
- Older children have researched diversity and inclusion and produced a wall display to show their findings. All children can access a range of non-fiction books in the school library which celebrate the diversity of society. They explain well that people across society have differences and should all be treated fairly and with respect. Children show their understanding of this successfully in their interactions with each other and adults.
- The headteacher works well with partner agencies and staff in nursery and the local secondary school to develop enhanced, individualised transition programmes for children experiencing barriers to their learning. This is helping children to move from nursery to primary and primary to secondary school as confidently as possible.
- The headteacher uses Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) effectively to provide targeted support in literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics for children experiencing barriers to learning, including those most affected by poverty. The headteacher is seeking ways to use PEF to help all children to be fully included in out of school activities, such as the kayak club. The headteacher accesses funding and resources from local charities and providers successfully to support families facing hardship.

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

- Overall, most children's attainment in numeracy, and almost all aspects of literacy, is good. At each stage, a few children are making very good progress in literacy and numeracy. Children with additional support needs are making good progress towards their individual targets in learning.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, most children are making good progress in reading and writing. Most children are making good progress in listening, but their talking skills are less well developed.

Listening and talking

- Most children across the school listen well for instructions and are keen to answer questions in class. At early level, children enjoy listening to stories. They listen well for instructions, for example in PE lessons. They need support to listen to each other and to take turns during discussions. At first level, most children take turns appropriately during class and group discussions. They need to develop more confidence in sharing their ideas and opinions. Children at second level are considerate and attentive listeners. They cannot yet describe the features required when presenting to a group and what makes a respectful audience. An important next step is to develop their confidence and skills in talking and speaking to a group.

Reading

- By the end of early level, most children are developing well their knowledge of initial and blended sounds. They read familiar texts with accuracy and use their knowledge of sounds and rhyme to decode unknown words. At first level, children are using their knowledge of sounds and phonics to decode unfamiliar words. With prompting, children at first and second levels can identify some famous authors. Children tend to prefer reading non-fiction books for pleasure. A next step is for teachers to consider how to promote a love of reading across different genres, including fiction.

Writing

- At early level, children are learning to form letters correctly. They attempt to write as they engage in imaginative play. By the end of first level, children write for different purposes and confidently identify features of a few genres, such as imaginative and personal writing. As children approach the end of second level, most can use paragraphs within extended pieces of writing. They use a range of punctuation correctly in their writing.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, most children are making good progress in numeracy and mathematics. A few children are making very good progress.

Number, money and measure

- At early level, most children can order numbers zero to ten correctly. They use correct mathematical language in their play, for example, when comparing the size of the 'cookies' they make using playdough. Children who have achieved first level can identify the place value of three-digit numbers and can add on and subtract from these. They confidently divide numbers by ten and 100. They have brisk recall of multiplication tables. They calculate appropriate combinations of coins to make up a particular amount and can work out giving change confidently. Children working towards the second level can confidently round numbers to the nearest 1,000. They identify equivalent fractions, but they find converting simple fractions into decimals and percentages more challenging. They are confident in money calculations, including cost comparison. They are not yet well informed about the advantages and disadvantages of credit and debit cards.

Shape, position and movement

- At early level, children can confidently identify most familiar two-dimensional shapes. They are less confident in identifying the names of three-dimensional objects. Children who have achieved first level can identify common three-dimensional objects. They are able to use compass directions very well. Children working towards second level can calculate the perimeter and area of quadrilaterals. They are less confident about the properties of circles. A few can identify the major types of angles, including acute, obtuse, and reflex.

Information handling

- At the end of early level, children can confidently match and sort unfamiliar objects into sets. Children who have achieved first level can explain confidently how they would organise and carry out a simple survey, record the responses as tally marks and display the results. They are familiar with bar graphs, pie charts and Venn diagrams. Children working towards second level can also explain how they would carry out a survey. They are aware of pictograms, bar graphs, pie charts and Venn diagrams and can identify which option is most appropriate depending on the information that is to be displayed.

Attainment over time

- Data gathered by the headteacher shows that the pandemic had a negative impact on children's progress and attainment, in particular, for children at the early and first levels. The headteacher and staff are taking steps to address this. They are developing new approaches to the teaching of writing, reading and numeracy and mathematics. They provide very helpful, targeted support for a minority of children who require extra assistance. This is supporting children to make appropriate progress. In addition, staff are working together to develop further their understanding of achievement of a level to enable them to make more robust judgements of children's progress, particularly in literacy.
- The headteacher has implemented a range of new assessments and tests to check all children's progress in spelling, reading and numeracy throughout the school year. As a result, and with the addition of newly developed tracking and monitoring processes, the staff team now have a better understanding of children's attainment. The data they have gathered demonstrates that most children are now making good progress in literacy and numeracy.

Overall quality of learner's achievement

- All children in P4 to P7 are working towards their Scottish Junior Forester Award. As a result, children have a real-life context to apply and develop their outdoor learning skills and environmental stewardship. Across the school, children's achievements, within and outwith school, are celebrated. Staff have established a successful system, which encourages parents to regularly share their children's achievements from home. Staff use different methods well to share children's successes with parents, for example digital platforms. They deliver and work with partners effectively to offer different activities. All staff are aware of children's

achievements and take steps to ensure all children have opportunities to enjoy success. Staff should now support children to have a greater understanding of the skills they are developing as part of their achievements.

Equity for all learners

- The headteacher and staff have a strong focus on social inclusion. They have a clear understanding of the socio-economic background of all children and families. The headteacher has prioritised the use of PEF to provide targeted support for individual children. This is helping them make better progress in literacy and numeracy and to develop more resilience and confidence. Staff understand the impact of the pandemic and the rising cost of living affecting families. The Parent Council, wider parent group and local community support the school very generously. They fund different educational trips and activities to ensure no child is at risk of missing out.

Explanation of terms of quantity

The following standard Education Scotland terms of quantity are used in this report:

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|-------------------------|---------------|
| 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.