

Summarised inspection findings

Furnace Primary School

Argyll and Bute Council

6 December 2022

Key contextual information

Furnace Primary School is a small rural school located to the south of Inveraray in Mid Argyll. At the time of inspection there were three children on the school roll, who are taught in a multi-composite class. This session there is a completely new team of staff at Furnace, which includes a new Acting Headteacher, Principal Teacher and classteacher (0.2FTE). The school is also currently in a new and changed shared headship arrangement, with an Acting Headteacher of both Furnace and Inveraray Primary Schools. None of the current school team were in post during the COVID-19 pandemic. The school community has experienced significant challenges as a result of COVID-19, including substantial periods of absence for children. COVID-19 related absence resulted in remote learning being undertaken by a third of the school roll during the week of the inspection.

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

- Staff at Furnace Primary School show a clear commitment to children's welfare and development. There is a calm, positive and inclusive ethos in the school. Strong relationships exist between staff and children and amongst children themselves. Children are well-behaved and welcoming to visitors to their school. Children engage well in their learning, including during periods of remote learning. Learning reflects the school's recently revised values, which children display in their daily life in school. Given the small size of the school, staff support children very well individually during their learning experiences.
- There is a much smaller school roll this session. As a result, staff understand that children need to enhance their social skills and confidence by interacting with a wider range of peers. Staff have increased the opportunities for children to learn with peers at Inveraray Primary School in many aspects of their learning. This includes in science, Physical Education and weekly outdoor learning. All of these experiences are developing the skills and confidence of individual children well. It would be helpful to develop the partnership further, for example group presentations at assemblies, school lunches, or reciprocal visits to Furnace Primary School. Children welcome the resumption of activities, suspended during the pandemic, which support the development of their confidence and leadership skills. Examples include linking well with new partner organisations who use the Furnace school building, such as the parent-toddler group.
- Overall, the quality of teaching is good. Staff share clear instructions and explanations with children, including the purpose of lessons and what success should look like. Staff should now develop this further, with children taking more ownership and contributing more fully to know if they are successful in their learning.

- Staff support bespoke learning for each individual to build on their strengths and needs. Individual learning plans are in place for children, with multi-agency partnership inputs as appropriate. Staff clearly plan for next steps in children's learning, including what is to be learned and assessed. Children's progress in Curriculum for Excellence levels is measured in relation to individual targets.
- Staff link learning activities across the curriculum very effectively to real-life contexts, for example with numeracy and construction or literacy, science and space. They create stimulating learning environments for children. Staff use praise well, to encourage children's responses. They use questioning to engage children well and promote their curiosity and independence in learning. Staff should now extend children's higher-order thinking skills to support a deepening of learning.
- A play-based learning approach is evident throughout children's experiences. This includes children engaging in activities indoors and outdoors which enrich their learning, such as imaginative play or construction. As planned, staff should continue to develop play-based pedagogies using national guidance such as 'Realising the Ambition', working with others in their partner school.
- Staff and children use digital technology very well throughout teaching and learning. This is a key strength of the school. Older children are skilled in the use of technologies and enjoy sharing their skills with staff and their peers. Staff, children and parents use a digital approach to share learning and communicate with each other. There is potential to extend the use of digital approaches, for example to share learning from home.
- Children access learning outdoors on a regular basis, particularly with their peers at Inveraray Primary School. They enjoy high-quality learning experiences at the beach or in the forest surrounding Inveraray. Children are developing knowledge about their local environment and the wider community as a result of their learning outdoors. As identified, there is scope to revive the development of the Furnace Primary School grounds, working in partnership with the school community. This would enhance learning experiences, for example designing, planning and creating aspects of school grounds to support learning.
- Staff plan appropriate learning across all areas of the curriculum. Children are involved in planning many aspects of their learning, following their interests and responding to their needs. Staff track children's progress in learning effectively, on a weekly and termly basis. Staff should continue to develop this planning and tracking to ensure they have clear information on attainment across all curricular areas. Staff have identified the need to develop a more bespoke curriculum rationale for the school, reflecting their unique circumstances and identity. This would enhance children's learning experiences across the curriculum.
- Teachers use formative assessment approaches well across the school. Children self and peer assess aspects of their learning. There is scope to extend peer assessment through linking with children from other schools. Children are provided with a range of oral and written feedback which supports them to identify their next steps in learning. Learning conversations helpfully support children to reflect on their strengths and areas of development. Teachers should increase sharing of learning targets and progress with parents on a more regular basis, along with increasing opportunities for shared learning with parents. This would support parents to understand children's progress and support learning together.
- Teachers are continuing to enhance their understanding of national standards through moderation with others. Moderation of writing takes place effectively with colleagues from Inveraray Primary School and is being extended across Mid Argyll Schools. Staff should

continue to link with other schools, to extend their professional learning and enhance their skills in providing reliable assessment evidence.

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

At the time of the inspection, the school roll comprised of learners at P4, P5 and P6. Because of this profile, attainment and progress will be expressed in 'overall' statements, rather than for specific year groups or Curriculum for Excellence levels.

- Overall, attainment across the school in literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics is satisfactory. A minority of children have achieved appropriate Curriculum for Excellence levels in literacy and numeracy. The majority of children who face barriers to learning are making good progress towards their individual learning targets. Staff are aware of aspects of progress which were impacted by COVID-19, particularly in literacy, and are addressing this effectively. Detailed tracking information indicates that the majority of children are predicted to achieve appropriate levels in reading, listening and talking and numeracy by the end of this session. Data reflects children's attainment accurately.

Attainment in literacy and English

Listening and talking

- The majority of children are making good progress in their listening and talking skills. Children listen well to others and ask polite questions, either in class, or through remote learning activities. The link with their new partner school at Inveraray is supporting children in gaining confidence in speaking to a wider group of children and adults. Children engaged well with discussions during inspection, including talking knowledgably about their interests. As identified by staff, children would benefit from continued opportunities to socialise with wider groups and develop further confidence and skills in speaking in larger group situations.

Reading

- The majority of children are making good progress in reading. Children understand features of different types of texts and share thoughts about structure, character and setting of novels. They enjoy working as a group reading their whole class novel. The majority of children read well with fluency and expression. Well-resourced school libraries are utilised to support extending the variety of books for children. Staff and partners successfully provide support for children to extend their enjoyment of reading. This support is effective in developing children's confidence in reading. As a result, their enjoyment of reading is being enhanced. Children should continue to develop their skills further by reading a wide variety of fiction material for enjoyment.

Writing

- Overall, children are making satisfactory progress in writing. Staff have correctly identified raising attainment in writing as a key area of school improvement. Effective strategies are being implemented to support individuals in writing. A few children can write at length for a range of purposes. Children would benefit from collaborating with individuals or peers in other schools, to enhance opportunities to write for an audience. Overall, children can organise sentences in logical sequences, including writing recipes. Children write acrostic poems well. Children write more confidently about real-life events such as diary entries about Tim Peake and newspaper reports of current events. As staff have identified, children need to gain further skills in the presentation of their written work.

Numeracy and mathematics

- The majority of children are making good progress in numeracy and mathematics.

Number, money and measure

- Overall, children are confident in rounding, place value and ordering to thousands. Children can estimate and measure confidently in real-life situations, for example changing the displays in classrooms. Staff provide very effective opportunities to link numeracy to real-life contexts, for example, online meetings with a sports analyst and a construction planner. Children can calculate the amount of money to pay for shopping within a budget, including through use of technologies such as mobile phone calculators. As planned, children now need to continue to extend their skills in mental agility in calculations.

Shape, position and movement

- Children understand the terminology of angles. They use right angles confidently to create parabolic curves. They can identify a range of two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects.

Information handling

- Children can gather, collate and interpret information through the use of bar graphs, block graphs, tables and axes. Children use digital technologies well to support displaying results of surveys or learning, for example in their space work. Children should continue to develop their skills in displaying data in a variety of means.

Attainment over time

- Given the very small school roll and changing cohorts of children each year, attainment over time is a varied picture. Staff track progress individual children are making towards meeting their individual targets well. This progress is aligned to Curriculum for Excellence levels. The new staff team acknowledge that overall attainment across the school is satisfactory and there is capacity for improvement. They have accurately identified aspects of attainment which require particular focused support for each individual and are implementing appropriate strategies to support this well. This includes aspects of listening and talking, writing or numeracy. Staff are increasingly confident when making professional judgements using a wide variety of data. The planned increase in regular opportunities for moderation with colleagues from Inveraray Primary School and Mid Argyll schools should support staff to develop their skills further.
- The acting headteacher and staff monitor the attendance of individuals. Attendance is lower than local authority average levels. The acting headteacher is taking proactive steps to support increasing attendance and resilience, working with Allied health professionals and families in a sensitive manner. This is at the early stage of improving attendance. This is an important area to continue to focus on, in order that children have maximum opportunities to

learn and achieve at school. A range of partners enhance the learning experiences for children at Furnace Primary very well, both within and outwith the school. Staff link closely with colleagues from Lochgilphead Joint Campus, to support smooth transitions for children moving on to secondary school.

Overall quality of learner's achievements

- Children's achievements are recognised and celebrated, through a variety of means. These include school displays, sharing learning through a digital resource and newsletters. Children gain confidence and achieve success within and outwith school, for example, through activities such as horse riding. Leadership skills are gained through opportunities such as intergenerational working, linking with the parent and toddler group and grandparents in the extended school community. A helpful next step would be to extend discussions with children to identify skills they are gaining from achievements and link these to skills for learning, life and work.

Equity for all learners

- Staff understand issues in relation to socio-economic circumstances of families, rural poverty and potential isolation. Staff utilise Pupil Equity Funding well to support children to achieve and address any attainment gaps. This also supports equity of opportunity for all children. External input supports aspects of literacy and enjoyment of reading very effectively. Horse-riding sessions contribute to improving children's health and wellbeing and confidence. Staff should continue to monitor the impact of additional interventions on skills, attributes and outcomes for children. This should ensure that skills are developed in a progressive way.

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.