

Summarised inspection findings

Achahoish Primary School

Argyll and Bute Council

10 March 2020

Key contextual information

Achahoish Primary is a small, rural, and coastal school in Argyll and Bute. At the time of the inspection, there were six children on the school roll. There is one multi-stage class. There were no children at P1 or at P7. The headteacher has been in post for a year, initially in an acting role. She also leads Clachan Primary School as a shared responsibility.

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

- The schools recently reviewed vision and aims of 'kindness and respect' are supporting children to build their confidence and resilience. Children enjoy positive, nurturing relationships with each other and staff. All children are polite and respectful to one another. Children are developing their confidence in talking to, and engaging with visitors to the school. Children enjoy learning and are happy in school. As a result of the small numbers and the positive ethos in the school, there is a strong sense of family. Older children are patient and kind to younger children in the class. Most children engage well with the range of learning experiences provided for them. Children work well in pairs and small groups for different learning activities and a few children are developing as independent learners. There is potential for children to work more independently more frequently. Overall, children need to be involved in more active learning contexts. Aspects of their learning which currently engage them well include outdoor learning, cooking, technology and science.
- Teachers are committed to using the school's coastal location to develop further approaches to outdoor learning. Children show a keen interest in the land and sea. They benefit from the use of the community garden, where they learn to grow salad crops and vegetables. Children sell produce from the garden to the local community. This enhances their financial education. They enjoy working outdoors in the coastal classroom they have newly created. Through this approach, they are developing further their understanding of risk. Children use the coastal area as a stimulus for creative thinking in art as they make three-dimensional creations using natural materials.
- Teachers use digital technology well to enhance learning and teaching. Children confidently use laptop and tablet technology to reinforce learning and practise skills. This includes researching the internet and recording work achieved. Children are enjoying developing skills in coding. Teachers should continue to increase the range of ways digital technology is used to enhance learning, teaching and assessment. This should include developing children's digital skills further in literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics.
- In most lessons, teachers share the purpose of lessons and provide children with guidance for what they need to do to be successful. Children are beginning to develop personalised targets in literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics. This is beginning to help them

understand their next steps in learning. Building on this positive start, children would benefit from regular, planned opportunities to review and discuss personal targets with their teachers. This will further support children to talk about themselves as learners and to understand what they need to do to improve. Children are at the early stages of assessing their work and that of their peers. There is potential for teachers to develop further questioning techniques to promote children's higher-order thinking skills. Teachers provide praise related written and oral feedback to children. Staff should develop further their skills in providing more evaluative feedback to help children understand how they are progressing and what they need to do to improve.

- Teachers provide a range of teaching approaches and learning environments. In the majority of lessons, teachers provide clear explanations and instructions to children. While teachers are gaining confidence in setting tasks and learning activities to meet better the needs of children currently, tasks and activities are not always at the right level of difficulty. The school plans to develop further the pace of learning to support and challenge all children appropriately for their age and stage of development. This should include those children capable of more challenge.
- Recently, the headteacher introduced an assessment overview. This supports teachers to plan summative and standardised assessments in literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics. Teachers should now broaden the range of assessment evidence they use to inform their professional judgements, including formative assessment. They need to improve how they use assessment information to inform children's learning.
- Teachers are at the early stages of developing a shared understanding of achievement of a level. They have begun to moderate children's writing with another associated primary school. Teachers are involved in shared planning activities to help agree standards in learning and teaching. They need to extend their understanding of progress within a level, developing further their use of National Benchmarks in all curricular areas.
- The annual curriculum overview ensures children experience appropriate coverage of experiences and outcomes. Teachers have made an early start in developing literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics planners to show progression from early to third level. In taking this forward, they should develop clearer, skills-based progression frameworks, taking account of local and national guidance and the school's unique context. This will help teachers when they are planning within a level and support children's learning.

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

- There is one multi-stage class in the school. Due to the fact that every cohort in this school is fewer than ten, statements about progress have been made to ensure the anonymity of individual children.

Overall attainment in literacy and numeracy

- Overall, children's attainment and progress in literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics is weak. It is important that teachers identify appropriate evidence on which to base their professional judgements. This evidence should show breadth, challenge and application of children's learning.
- Teachers need to engage in moderation and increased professional dialogue across the cluster to ensure their professional judgements on achievement of a level are reliable and robust.
- The school has made initial progress in increasing pace and challenge for children. There remains significant headroom for children across the school to achieve more across all levels. Teachers should improve their approaches to analysing data to ensure all children are making the best possible progress from prior levels of attainment.

Attainment in literacy and English

Listening and talking

- Overall, children's progress in listening and talking is satisfactory. Younger children give brief responses when asked questions. They need to develop confidence to articulate ideas more fully. Older children are achieving appropriate skills in talking. They talk about their interests and know what they want to learn.
- Across the school, children display a varied vocabulary and are beginning to talk confidently about their own experiences, sharing views and opinions. Children are working on turn taking and listening to the opinions of others. They lack confidence when talking to people not familiar to them.
- In class, children listen well to staff. They work in pairs and groups, which is supporting the development of their listening and talking skills. They make digital presentations about Diwali and farming and enjoy sharing these with their classmates. Although children have experiences such as these, they are not yet able to articulate clearly and demonstrate the different skills they are developing in listening and talking.

Reading

- Overall, children's progress in reading is weak. Children are not progressing well enough with their reading skills. There is much headroom to improve children's reading skills overall. The recent focus on daily reading is beginning to help children develop an enjoyment of reading. The school has identified that children need to develop their skills using the tools for reading more effectively. There are signs of improvement as younger children begin to recognise initial sounds more confidently. They require more support to enable them to engage more successfully with print.
- A few older children identify and make use of different reading strategies to decode unfamiliar texts. Targeted phonics and spelling work is beginning to help children read known texts more fluently. Older children are practising their reading to develop expression and fluency. They cannot yet skim and scan different texts for key ideas and information. They need to develop their skills in discussing texts and finding relevant information with growing confidence.
- The school has recently developed a new school library and community book exchange. As a result, children across the school are beginning to display a growing interest in books. Most are able to identify their favourite author or book. However, children are not yet able to confidently talk about the work of different authors and express their favourite writers. Children would benefit from more practice in answering and asking questions about ideas and events in texts. Across the school, children need to be reading a wide variety of texts that are well matched to their skills and progress.

Writing

- Overall, children's progress in writing is weak. The teaching of writing requires an increased focus to ensure improvement across all levels. Children are beginning to see the need to improve their presentation and handwriting. Younger children's skills in the formation of letters are developing. They require more support to develop their early writing skills and punctuation further. Too few older children produce continuous pieces of good quality writing. They do not apply their knowledge of punctuation consistently well in their writing. They use paragraphs and attempt to start their sentences in different ways to engage the reader.
- Across the stages, there is a need for children to have a clearer understanding of the standards expected of them. An agreed presentation standard would help to support this. Staff need to provide a broader range of experiences to ensure children are skilled in writing across a wider range of genre.

Overall attainment in numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, children need more opportunities to reinforce learning continually to ensure their skills in numeracy and mathematics are sufficiently well developed and they can apply them in a range of new and unfamiliar contexts.

Number, money, and measure

- Younger children count forwards and backwards from one up to 20 with support. They add and subtract with increasing confidence to 10. Younger children are not yet using one-to-one correspondence accurately to count a given number of objects. Older children can round whole numbers to the nearest hundred and can add and subtract four digit numbers. They are beginning to use written strategies to support their understanding of multiplication. Older children are beginning to work with decimal fractions. They do not yet have an understanding of the relationship between fractions, decimal fractions and percentages. Children across the school are not confident in using mental strategies to carry out calculations.

Shape, position, and movement

- While children recognise and name two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects, they are not yet confident in using the correct mathematical language to describe and compare their properties. Across the school, children need to develop their skills and knowledge of different types of angles.

Information handling

- Children across the school gather data and display it on simple bar graphs. Older children are beginning to use technology to record and display data. Older children need to make effective use of technology when creating graphs and charts and gain further skills in analysis and interpretation of data.

Attainment over time

- The school provided attainment data for the previous session, based on a range of summative and standardised assessments. Assessment data is not used consistently well by class teachers to ensure that children make very good progress from their prior learning. Teachers should now improve their use of data to develop a clear and accurate overview of children's attainment and progress over time. There is considerable scope for more children to be achieving expected levels in reading, writing and numeracy. Improvement priorities now need to lead to raising attainment in literacy and numeracy.

Overall quality of achievement

- All staff are aware of children's interests, talents and achievements. They acknowledge and celebrate children's achievements through displays. As a result of a recent visit from the local shinty club, almost all children joined the club in the community. Learners talk positively about the skills they are learning. Children participated recently in the Tarbert Book Festival poetry competition. They value the opportunity to display their learning in poetry within the wider community. Teachers should continue to make links with the local community to extend the range of opportunities available to children. They should monitor and track children's participation with a focus on the skills children are developing because of their participation.
- Teachers invite visitors from, and take children to visit businesses in the local community. Teachers enhance children's experiences in science and support the development of skills for life and work through visits to the Ormsary Estate, local windfarm and fish farm. They should continue to plan learning that takes account of the children's local community.
- Children have access to regular outdoor learning. Teachers use outdoor learning to allow children to work with children from their partner schools. They benefit from working in larger groups. Teachers are beginning to make explicit links to the skills children are developing in confidence and resilience through outdoor learning. As a result, older children are beginning to articulate the skills they are developing through learning outdoors.

Equity for all learners

- All staff have a shared understanding of the socio-economic background of their school community. Children who require additional support with their learning benefit from skilful and sensitive support from support staff. As a result, children targeted for this extra support are making further progress in their reading skills. This is impacting positively on children's engagement in learning. The headteacher should monitor this support regularly to examine the impact of the support on the learning and progress of individual children.

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.