

# Summarised inspection findings

Inverarity Primary School and Nursery Class

Angus Council

21 January 2020

## Key contextual information

Inverarity Primary School is a small rural school located outside Forfar in Angus. There is a nursery class along with two primary classes. At the time of inspection, there were 13 children in the nursery and 32 children in the primary school.

### 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 and staff have taken positive action to review the vision, values and aims over the last year, in partnership with children, staff and parents. The strong leadership of the headteacher has enabled the school and wider community to develop and promote their vision. Staff have a sound understanding of the social, economic and cultural context in which children and families live. This helps them to deliver the school's vision, values and aims. The headteacher and staff use the updated values and aims increasingly well to inform and evaluate improvements.
- The headteacher has a clear direction for improvement of the school, with high expectations of both staff and children. This aspiration contributes strongly to enhancing the nurturing climate and inclusive ethos across the school. The headteacher has very effectively guided the strategic direction of improvements for learners and the pace of changes is well-managed. The headteacher is leading important aspects of development well, such as ensuring a clearer focus on developing the curriculum.
- The school improvement plan takes good account of the values and aims of the school, as well as national priorities. Through the plan, the headteacher has identified key priorities, taking account of self-evaluation and using available data. Supported by the headteacher, staff are involved in deciding the priorities for improvement, based on evidence from collective self-evaluation. They have identified action points in relation to addressing any attainment gaps, in line with national guidance. There are signs that improvement actions are having a positive impact on children's learning, for example, in relation to literacy. The school uses creative and innovative approaches well to illustrate school improvement work, through their school improvement journey wall.
- Staff work well together and are becoming more confident in understanding what the school does well and what needs to improve further. The headteacher empowers members of staff to take various leadership opportunities across the school. Examples include reviewing and developing a new approach to aspects of literacy across school, and leading the development of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) in the upper stages. As planned, the headteacher should continue to extend collaborative leadership opportunities for all staff, linked to evidence-based improvements. The headteacher has rightly identified the need to continue to monitor and measure the impact of change and improvements.

- The headteacher and staff work very well with parents and partners in the local community of Inverarity. Parents are involved in school improvement through strong partnerships with the supportive Parent Council and the wider parental community. Parents support many learning activities in and out of class. A parent/carer café takes place to share features of school life including improvement priorities. To support improvement, the school asks parents for feedback following events at school. Staff lead workshops focusing on areas of learning, which are positively received by parents. As a result, parents are becoming more involved in supporting their child's learning.
- Partners are very positive about relationships with the school. The headteacher has responded very well to feedback from parents regarding issues that are important to them. Through the headteacher's leadership, working with parents, partners, Angus Council and the community, there is clear evidence of improvement. To promote children's wider achievement, the school offers a variety of clubs and the school playground is now open out of hours. Parents and partners are very positive about these improvements. Parents and children report increased physical activity of children along with benefits of using the playground as a safe environment to play and socialise. Children state that they very much enjoy the new opportunities and spend more time playing outside with their friends. As planned, the school should continue to extend working with parents and partners in ongoing consultation, planning and evaluation of school improvements.
- Children have a clear voice in the wider life of the school and all are involved in pupil participation groups. Each group takes forward aspects of school improvement. In addition to their groups, children are empowered to undertake a range of leadership roles to support improvements. Examples include children acting as playground leaders and older children acting as buddies for younger ones. The headteacher and staff seek children's views through various means, such as questionnaires and focus group discussions. Children show confidence in sharing positive developments through the visible school improvement journey wall. As a next step, staff should continue to encourage children to lead and reflect on improvements further, including for example, with the wider community.
- Staff participate in a wide variety of professional dialogue opportunities. To enhance an outward focus, there is now a need for staff to extend their research and include practitioner enquiry to support improvement further.
- The headteacher and staff have given due consideration for the best use of their allocation of Pupil Equity Funding. They have identified areas of focus, for example improving aspects of literacy. As a result of this focus, the school can demonstrate improvements in literacy. The school ensures that no child misses out on opportunities. Staff should continue to develop their skills in gathering and analysing information, in order to ensure best use of targeted funding to secure better outcomes for individual children.

## 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

- Inverarity is a welcoming, nurturing, friendly school, with a culture which reflects a commitment to children's rights and positive relationships. This creates a calm, happy environment where children are eager to learn. Positive relationships between staff, children and their peers across the school contribute to purposeful learning environments. Children are well behaved, polite and take great pride in their school. They know that the headteacher and staff seek and value their views. They are proud that this has resulted in improvements that they have helped to bring about.
- Children are enthusiastic and eager to learn. They engage well working individually, in pairs and groups. In most lessons, children are motivated and engaged in their tasks and activities. At times, learning can be overly teacher-directed, which inhibits learning. As planned, staff should develop further opportunities to enable children to lead more of their learning. This would allow them to develop greater independence and deepen their understanding of the purpose of their learning.
- Children work well together to support each other's learning. Staff share the purpose of learning with children. At times, children do not always know fully how to achieve success in their learning. Staff now need to give children more focused feedback on their successes and what they need to do to improve.
- Teachers provide engaging, relevant contexts, which motivate children and provide a safe environment for them to take risks in their learning. Tasks that provide challenge build successfully children's resilience. Children exercise choice when planning new learning as a class and when choosing levels of challenge within their own learning. Overall, staff need to continue to extend the level of challenge and expectations for children and develop open-ended approaches to learning. To encourage children to think more deeply about their learning, teachers need to extend the use of more open questioning. This includes the need to develop further children's higher-order thinking skills.
- Staff provide well-organised learning environments. Creative, play-based learning activities at the early stages stem from children's interests and ideas. Where this approach is used well, it motivates children to engage independently in investigative learning. Undertaking this on their own and with each other, promotes children's curiosity, independence and confidence. The school is well placed to develop this approach further and ensure these experiences provide children with more focus and progression in their learning. The headteacher and staff utilise the rich learning opportunities available in the school grounds, local community and further afield. As planned, staff should continue to extend use of the outdoors, to support further creative approaches to learning and teaching.

- Teachers give clear instructions and explanations to children. Staff, including specialists, provide appropriate and well-targeted support. Teachers make links within their teaching to revisit, support and reinforce learning. Staff use digital technology effectively to extend, enhance and support learning for all children and to remove barriers to learning for individual children.
- Teachers plan lessons well, at appropriate levels, based on the experiences and outcomes of Curriculum for Excellence. The school's revised approach to planning appropriately over different timescales supports continuity in learning. Staff helpfully share medium and long term planning with parents through, for example, class newsletters. Teachers evaluate progress and identify next steps for individuals and groups. As a next step, there is now a need to involve learners more in planning learning.
- New approaches to learning and teaching in literacy are providing valid and reliable assessment evidence, through more regular reviewing of learning. Children self-assess their writing and discuss this with a teacher. Staff should now extend the use of peer assessment and build on good practice across the school in providing children with feedback on their writing. Teachers' observations identify how well learning is progressing in literacy and numeracy. They are developing the use of holistic assessments, to review children's understanding and application of skills in different and unfamiliar contexts. There is a need to continue to focus on assessment, to ensure it is embedded in planning, learning and teaching across the curriculum.
- The school tracks children's progress effectively towards national standards in literacy and numeracy. Teachers discuss tracking information with the headteacher regularly, including predictions for individual and group attainment. The headteacher and staff identify appropriate support and interventions to address any concerns regarding children's progress. There is now a need to extend teachers' tracking and monitoring of attainment across all curricular areas.
- Moderation of writing has led to improved teachers' professional judgements of achievement of a Curriculum for Excellence level. Staff recognise the need to extend the use of the National Benchmarks to support assessment and moderation of standards across all curricular areas. As planned, they should continue to work together within the school, and with cluster schools, to develop a shared understanding of national standards. Staff should utilise these opportunities to ensure their professional judgement of progress, attainment and achievement are robust.
- The headteacher and staff, including specialists, jointly plan learning to meet the needs of children facing additional challenges. This ensures that children make appropriate progress from prior levels of learning. Staff utilise and review specific interventions and approaches well, to ensure they result in positive outcomes for all learners.

## 2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- See choice QI.

## 2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- The school recognises the variety of ways in which parents contribute to a child's time in school, particularly where children experience barriers to their learning. Parents engage very effectively to make improvements in the school. This arises through strong partnerships with the Parent Council; the many parents who volunteer in school; and parental support in fundraising.
- Parents appreciate the recent changes which have benefited their children. Parents value the time and prompt attention that the headteacher and staff give to addressing queries that they may have. Parents appreciate the recent workshops led by staff to share aspects of literacy. The school should build on these successes to involve parents further in their children's learning.
- The school involves parents in taking forward improvement priorities. The school should continue to engage with parents around the development of the curriculum rationale in order to share how children can be supported in their learning
- The school enjoys very positive partnership working with local businesses and farms in the community, along with wider community partners. Examples include the links between the parent council, the community council and the church.

## 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

very 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

- Within Inverarity Primary School, there is a very positive and nurturing ethos. Wellbeing and inclusion are key features of the school. Children talk knowledgeably about the actions they can take to ensure their wellbeing. The wellbeing indicators feature visually in the school and children are developing a good understanding of them. For example, children know what a healthy diet is, the importance of exercise and how to keep themselves emotionally healthy. As a result of a focus on improving physical activity, children report feeling stronger, having more stamina and finding it easier to complete repeat activities. Children understand their responsibility in decision making and the role society has to keep them safe. This includes, for example, through their links with the community police officer in relation to road safety. Children understand what it means to be happy and how to support others.
- The school has created a strong culture of collaboration and is building a wide range of effective partnerships, delivering positive outcomes for children and the wider community. Opening up the school grounds outwith hours and the creation of well attended sport and dance clubs has increased levels of children's physical activity. These opportunities provide children, including those with barriers to learning, with improved access to safe spaces in which to socialise and be physically active. Increased involvement with other primary schools is building children's confidence, supporting them to build friendships and relationships outwith school. Children report that participation in these activities is beginning to address issues of resilience in response to experiencing challenge and change.
- The headteacher ensures that staff have a shared understanding of their role and responsibility for the wellbeing of children. This is evident throughout school life. Staff know children's needs well and are responsive to changing circumstances. As a result, relationships throughout the school are very positive. Children and staff demonstrate care and respect for each other, and for visitors to the school. Children have confidence and trust in their relationships with the adults at school. They have many opportunities to express their views and opinions and do so in a safe, nurturing environment. Children are included, engaged and involved as active participants in the life of the school.
- Staff undertake appropriate professional learning activities, which support them well to understand children's individual needs. This is helping increase their knowledge of which interventions would prove most effective in supporting children to overcome barriers to their learning. Examples include professional learning in approaches to aspects of language development, with support from allied health professionals. Because of this, staff are more confident in supporting individual children, resulting in improvements in children's self-esteem and confidence in learning.

- Children's attendance levels are very high, and there have been no exclusions over the last two sessions.
- The school is meeting the duties of the Schools (Health Promotion and Nutrition) (Scotland) Act 2007 to promote the school meals service, ensure access to free drinking water throughout the day and to protect the identity of children entitled to free school meals.
- The school has very effective procedures in place to identify additional support that individual children may require. The headteacher has a good understanding of responsibilities related to statutory duties. She has a clear overview of children's learning needs across the school. Through focused discussions and meetings with staff, she reviews this information very well to deploy support staff. This ensures children receive the support they need, when they need it.
- Staff are increasingly confident in identifying barriers to learning and adapting interventions to meet individual children's needs, making effective use of local authority guidance. Where more targeted intervention is required, children have individualised educational programmes (IEPs). IEPs feature clear actions to address the main barriers that the child is facing. Children are involved fully in identifying their targets. Staff deploy a range of appropriate interventions to support children. Pupil support assistants work very well with children, providing valuable support to ensure children can access their learning. Due to the school's effective approach, children who face barriers to learning are achieving well, and making appropriate progress in their learning. Children requiring additional support are developing their confidence in preparation for transition for their move onto secondary school.
- The school celebrates diversity through a range of events and celebrations. Religious and moral education supports children to develop their understanding of other faiths. The school should now develop the curriculum further, supporting children to become more aware of themselves as global citizens.
- Inclusion is an important aspect of the school's work. Children requiring additional support are included well in classes and in learning opportunities with partners beyond the school. There are very effective strategies in place, which are improving attainment and achievement for children who face challenges. The school effectively monitors and tracks achievements of children experiencing a range of barriers to learning, including socio-economic disadvantage. This supports staff well to identify children making appropriate progress and plan for those for whom additional support may be required.

### 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

- Inverarity Primary School is a small school, where the number of children in cohorts varies and is often fewer than four. Therefore, overall statements about progression are made to ensure anonymity for individual children. Within this analysis of data, it is important to recognise the proportion of children across the school who face additional challenge in their learning.
- School data indicates that most children are making appropriate progress towards achieving expected Curriculum for Excellence levels. This includes those with additional barriers to learning. Almost all children attain expected levels in reading and listening and talking, with most attaining expected levels in writing and numeracy. The school's current predictions of children's attainment show they are on track to achieve.

#### Literacy and English

- Overall, children's attainment in literacy and English is good.

#### Listening and talking

- Overall, most children are making good progress in listening and talking. Almost all children listen well and are respectful of others views and opinions. They talk confidently to each other, in groups and with adults. Children have presented talks to their classes and performed to an audience of adults. They have interviewed parents to find out more about the world of work. Children's skills in listening and talking would benefit from being enhanced through progressively complex activities and experiences.

#### Reading

- Overall, children are making good progress in reading. Children across the school talk enthusiastically about the books they are reading. Almost all read known texts fluently, using expression and paying attention to punctuation. At the early stages, children can identify strategies for decoding unknown words and recognise how knowledge of phonics supports this. Children in the upper stages enjoy reading a range of books and can answer inferential, evaluative and literal questions about texts. Children's comprehension of texts is good. To support children to extend their comprehension skills, they would benefit from continuing to have access to more challenging texts across the curriculum.

#### Writing

- Overall, children are making good progress in writing. Children at the early stages write for a range of purposes across the curriculum. They write from personal experience and to inform and persuade others. Children in the upper stages write for a range of purposes and are developing knowledge and understanding of a wide range of text forms. Children's skills in writing for different purposes should be enhanced through extending experiences of writing

further across curriculum areas. Children need to be encouraged to ensure they present written work to consistently high standards across curricular areas.

## **Numeracy and mathematics**

- Overall, children's attainment and progress in mathematics is good.

### **Number, money and measure**

- At the early stages, most children can add and subtract, multiply and divide as part of lessons. Children's skills should be extended through applying independently this knowledge in activities and through a range of contexts to solve real-life problems. Children can use concrete materials to solve problems involving fractions and can explain their thinking to others. Most children can explain the terms numerator and denominator and link this to their learning. At the upper stages, most children solve a range of problems using the four operations. At times, children rely too heavily on written formal methods to find an answer. Children's skills in application of mental strategies for calculation should be enhanced through utilising strategies in a range of contexts across the curriculum.

### **Shape, position and movement**

- At the early stages, children can talk about simple two dimensional (2D) shapes and three dimensional (3D) objects. They apply this knowledge and understanding to solve practical problems in a range of ways. Examples include creating a pyramid from cubes and tessellations in the playground. Children can use their knowledge of coordinates to create treasure maps of the playground. Children at the upper stages name 2D shapes and 3D objects from their properties and understand the mathematical language linked to this. Children need to work more regularly with more complex shapes and objects to embed this learning.

### **Information handling**

- Children in the early stages have conducted surveys, collected data and presented it in a range of ways. They can use computer packages to produce a range of graphs and can interpret their findings. Children in the upper stages need more experiences to develop their information handling skills and to apply these across the curriculum. They should develop skills to use digital technology to organise and display data. Children across the school need to develop the language of probability and apply this to real-life contexts.

### **Attainment over time**

- Overall, most children are making good progress from their prior levels of attainment. Over recent years, attainment has improved, with almost all children achieving expected levels in reading and listening and talking. Most children are attaining expected levels in writing and numeracy in numeracy. Teachers track individual children's progress over time, based on their professional judgements. As identified by the headteacher, there is a need to extend tracking and increase professional dialogue around teachers' understanding of achievement of a level. This is to ensure teachers' professional judgements become increasingly reliable.

### **Overall quality of learners' achievements**

- All children are proud of their achievements, which are recognised and celebrated on displays, in class and at assemblies. The school has organised and planned opportunities for achievement beyond the classroom for all children. The headteacher and partners effectively plan together, to ensure children have opportunities to gain skills and achieve success within and outwith the school.
- All children develop skills, including confidence, through their leadership roles in the school and their involvement in sport, music and artistic events. For example, the majority of

children participate in football, cross-country or dance clubs after school. Children talk about how their participation in these clubs is developing skills, which help them perform better. Children report that access to the playground after school and in the evenings is developing further their social skills and physical fitness. Children enjoy participating in inter-school events and are proud of successes, for example in cross-country. Older children can explain skills for learning, life and work and how these link to their future employment. For example, the recent MacMillan coffee morning provided a rich learning opportunity for members of the pupil council to apply organisational skills.

### **Equity for all learners**

- There are very effective systems in place to promote equity of success and achievement for children. The headteacher carefully plans with partners and parents to ensure the removal of potential barriers to learning for children. Through a targeted approach utilising Pupil Equity Funding, the school has raised attainment in aspects of literacy. This has supported raising the attainment of individuals and groups of learners in literacy, in particular those who face additional challenge. Staff should continue to review the impact of targeted interventions and approaches to ensure they are achieving the maximum impact for children.

## Choice of QI: 2.2. Curriculum

- Rationale and design
- Development of the curriculum
- Learning pathways
- Skills for learning life and work

- The curriculum is responsive to children's interests and is based on experiences and outcomes from Curriculum for Excellence. The headteacher has rightly identified the curriculum review as a priority for the school. She is working with children, staff, parents and partners to review the curriculum rationale. She is using national guidance effectively to support this work and design a curriculum based around the unique context of the school. As a result of work in progress, the school is well placed to continue to develop their vision and rationale for the curriculum.
- The headteacher has accurately recognised the need to ensure learning pathways support progression in all areas of the curriculum. This includes the need for a shared understanding amongst staff of the four contexts for learning, to make the curriculum more meaningful.
- Staff use progression pathways for literacy and numeracy well, alongside a range of resources across the curriculum. The school has focused on literacy development and there is clear guidance in place to support progression in reading and writing. The school should now ensure effective support and professional development leads to progression in listening and talking.
- Staff use short, medium and long-term planning blocks for the curriculum. Staff are highly reflective practitioners. They review planning blocks of learning and adapt these in light of children's experiences and progress. Through professional dialogue, the headteacher and staff are usefully exploring the potential for developing creativity skills across the curriculum.
- Staff make good use of parents and partners to enrich learning. Staff enhance the curriculum through focused learning weeks involving a range of partners, for example, the eco gardening week with parents, grandparents and countryside rangers. Parents and partners share how skills and learning link to careers, supporting children's understanding of the world of work very well.
- Staff are gaining confidence in offering appropriate interdisciplinary learning opportunities for children. The focus on STEM in the upper stages very effectively linked classroom learning to relevant real-life contexts, working alongside partners.
- The school makes good use of outdoor learning opportunities in the playground, local community and beyond. There has been an increased focus on the development of outdoor learning over the last year. As identified by the headteacher and staff, positive plans are in place to continue to extend opportunities for outdoor learning. In taking this forward, staff should ensure that outdoor learning opportunities develop children's skills in a planned and progressive way.
- Children receive their entitlement to physical education. Children throughout the school learn French. As planned, the headteacher and staff need to provide a third language for the upper stages.
- Children use digital technology to support learning and to develop research and presentation skills. The number of digital devices has increased recently. With the forthcoming improved connectivity and professional learning, staff are well placed to develop further progressive

opportunities for learning in digital technology. There is potential to utilise further opportunities for children to lead and share their learning with parents through digital technologies.

- Transitions from nursery to P1 are effective, with children supported in a range of useful ways. Children at the early stages create a DVD about life in P1 to share with nursery children. Workshops with parents support a shared understanding of literacy learning and teaching in the early years. Staff should extend opportunities for planned learning across nursery and early stages, to support progression and continuity in children's learning. The headteacher and staff work well with schools across their secondary school cluster. Staff plan and support transitions between classes and from primary to secondary well. Children in P7 are offered various useful opportunities throughout the year to learn and socialise with children from other schools in their cluster. This supports children in developing their confidence and making friendships. Extended transitions to secondary are in place for children who require this.

## 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.